Partisan Review

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NOTES

STEVEN MARCUS, Professor of English at Columbia University, is currently Director of Planning for a National Humanities Center. . . . **RICHARD POIRIER** is spending the year writing a book on Robert Frost. . . . **SUSAN SONTAG's** third film, **Promised Land,** was made in Israel. . . . **STEPHEN SPENDER** is now teaching at the University of London. . . . **BARBARA ROSE's** revised edition of **American Art Since 1900** (Praeger) was published this Fall; her new book, **Art As Art, Selected Writings of Ad Reinhardt,** will be published by Viking in the Spring. . . . Poet in Residence at York College, CUNY, **DAVID IGNATOW** will have his **Selected Poems** published by Wesleyan University Press this year. . . . **STEPHEN BERG,** who has a Guggenheim Fellowship this year, is studying Chinese and Japanese painting and calligraphy. . . . A teacher at the University of Virginia, **ALAN WILLIAMSON** has completed a book of poems. . . . **JONATHAN BAUMBACH** teaches film and is co-director of the MFA program at Brooklyn College. . . . **PAUL ZWEIG's** most recent book of non-fiction, **The Adventurer,** was published by Basic Books. . . . Editor and writer, **ROBERT CLAIBORNE** was born in England, but has lived most of his life in New York City. . . . **VICTOR ERLICH's** next major project is a reexamination of Russian literary culture in the 1920s. . . . Chairman of the English Department at Williams, **LAWRENCE GRAVER** is editing a volume of Beckett criticism. . . . **PAUL A. ROBINSON,** who teaches at Stanford University, is working on a book about Havelock Ellis, Kinsey, and Masters and Johnson. . . . **BETTY FALKENBERG** writes on German literature and has just finished a book of short stories. . . . The University of Illinois Press will publish **JEROME KLINKOWITZ's** book on post-contemporary American fiction. . . . A retired professor of Classics and Humanities, **DONALD SUTHERLAND** does reviews and translations when not working on a book. . . . **SONYA RUDIKOFF** says that, relevant to her review, she "studied at the High School of Music and Art before the 1968 war." . . . **Eight Contemporary Poets,** by **CALVIN BEDIENT,** was recently published by Oxford University Press. . . . **NOAM CHOMSKY's** most recent books include **For Reasons of State** and **Peace in the Middle East?,** both published by Pantheon.

We neglected to mention again in the last issue (#3) that the poems for #2 and #3 were selected by Michael Anania. The poems for this issue have been selected by Paul Zweig.

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EXTRA POINTS

The essays by Steven Marcus and Richard Poirier in this issue were presented at a conference on the state of the humanities sponsored by *Partisan Review* and the Rockefeller Foundation on May 10, 1974 at the offices of the Foundation in New York. The participants, invited by *Partisan Review,* included Leo Braudy, Morris Dickstein, Thomas R. Edwards, Richard Gilman, Caroline Rand Herron, Frank Kermode, Edith Kurzweil, Christopher Lasch, Steven Marcus, Richard Poirier, Harold Rosenberg, Susan Sontag, Lionel Trilling and, representing the Rockefeller Foundation, Lydia Brontë, Dr. John Maier, Michael Novak, Ellsworth T. Newman, Kenneth Wernimont and Peter Wood. The discussion, which ran from about 10 in the morning to 4 in the afternoon, was led off by Morris Dickstein and Richard Gilman who had prepared comments on the lead papers.

I would like to say the conference was a wild success, particularly because I have felt for a long time that we talk better and more freely about our main concerns than we write about them. In fact, it seems sometimes that writing has become a strategy for evading bothersome questions. Of course, the conference was on an unusually high level, which would almost be guaranteed by the distinction of the participants, and several of them, tough-minded veterans of the conference business, said this was the best one they had ever attended. I felt so, too, though it must be said that there isn't much competition. For most conferences are little more than intellectual encounter groups, with talking taking the place of touching, though they are an essential part of the new verbal culture which assumes that the more talk there is on any given subject the better it is for the talkers, the listeners, and the subject.

I must confess, however, that we did not solve the problems of the humanities, though we were obviously bound by the iron law of conferences which forbids them to answer the questions they raise. But we did address ourselves to the complexity of the questions, and we did so with the awareness we had to deal with them speculatively and problematically particularly in a time of instant and fashionable solutions.

In general, we were divided on the aims of education, on the state of the arts, on the question of standards, on the relation of current works and

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attitudes to traditional ones—on many of the issues that divide us today. Though literary people tend to stress ambiguities rather than sharp distinctions, and though the atmosphere was only occasionally polemical, much of the discussion reflected three underlying positions. Several of the participants leaned toward a traditional view of standards in art and education; some took a quasi-Marxist, Marcusean position, suggesting that all our academic reforms—and the very spirit of moderation and compromise we brought to the problems of the humanities—served only to perpetuate the very things we were questioning; others had what they felt was a more open-ended, more concrete, less ideological approach in trying to relate teaching and writing to current moods and needs.

Perhaps the most striking thing about the conference was its non-ideological character. If there was a dominant note, it was an impatience both with the fashionable movements and ideologies of liberation and the equally fashionable anti-liberation movements and ideologies. As I read it, the general feeling was that there was no simple cure for the intellectual chaos of the period, no ready substitute for intelligent criticism, which at the moment seems to be in short supply, and is constantly confused with the latest intellectual fads. In fact, it seems to me one of the achievements of the conference was its avoidance of ready-made answers, at a time when people are so busy giving the answers that they have forgotten the questions.

W.P.

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LITERATURE AND THE ACADEMY

I think *Partisan Review* is in a unique position to conduct the kind of conference we are having today, even though no one would have thought when *Partisan Review* was young and brash that in May 1974 we would be sitting here solemnly discussing the fate of the humanities. Everyone assumed we had what Lionel Trilling has called an adversary role in the culture. But we knew then that this was only partly true and only in a specialized sense. What I think we were doing was not only to represent the best of the new, which was often in an adversary relation to the old, but to find the proper relation—or continuity—between the two, in order to create a live sense of the present and to recreate a usable past.

Today our aims are different, and perhaps because they are less clear-cut, they cause the wardens of the status quo to regard us as a wild, swinging magazine, and the really wild swingers to look at us as a pillar of the establishment. But, even if both are wrong, the fact is that the role of *PR* has changed. When *PR* was young it was a *spokesman* for what it thought was the best of the new writing and thinking, and even though we were not contemptuous of the idea of tradition, we were clearly partisans of the new, of the tradition of the new, as Harold Rosenberg put it. And we had a very specific idea of the new; it was a fusion of modernist sensibility and radical consciousness. Today, however, having reached the age of mellowness and wisdom, the magazine cannot authentically be the spokesman for the new movements and the new ideas, however discriminating we might be in selecting them. There is nothing so phony and so funny as an older writer—or magazine—putting on the uniform of youth. So while we have the important function of representing what we think is the best of the new, we cannot be its spokesman, its partisans as against the official or established culture. We are really in the role of mediators,

NOTE: These remarks by William Phillips were the introductory statement at *Partisan Review*'s Rockefeller Conference.

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or objective, however, sympathetic critics. To put it bluntly, we cannot be an avant-garde. But we can recognize, encourage, make discriminations about an avant-garde. In this respect, there is an important difference between a writer and a magazine: a writer whose ideas and sensibility were formed in his youth, in an earlier period, can afford to ignore trends and figures he does not like; a magazine, however, must be responsive to the current scene. This is why *PR* seems both to uphold tradition and to be open to new trends and ideas.

Hence the problems we face in the magazine are very much like if not identical with those of the humanities in general. I don't want to propose another definition of the humanities at this moment, but for the purposes of this discussion we can surely agree that one of the chief aims of the humanities is the study and teaching of the arts and of culture generally in such a way as to relate the present to the past, to look at the past through the eyes of the present, to make the history of art and culture part of the process of creating it. The humanities are the institutionalization of what we generally think of as critical and historical thinking. (I am, of course, talking mostly about literature and art, though other fields in the humanities, like history and philosophy, obviously have parallel functions.)

In this sense, the problems of the humanities, like those of a magazine, are the problems of criticism. And the main problem—if not *the* problem—of criticism is the relation of the old to the new. But this relation cannot be arrived at simply through theorizing; it must be conquered, so to speak, through judgment and discrimination. This is why academic criticism, moral criticism, sociological criticism is bad criticism; it is criticism without judgment, which means it is based on other people's judgment.

The plight of the humanities is a complex matter. But briefly, it might be said that the trouble is the study of culture has been cut off from the creation of culture, and has become a professionalized, autonomous enterprise. If this were to happen to a literary, cultural magazine, we would say immediately that it had gone academic, it had lost its touch, it had nothing to do with what was going on. But I guess we are more charitable toward the pursuit of the humanities in the universities, because we are less clear about their purposes and methods.

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Steven Marcus's and Richard Poirier's sharp but modulated papers are intended to open and suggest the directions of the discussion. But it might also be useful at this moment to specify some of the major questions which are raised by them and by the critical state of the humanities.

1. What should be taught and learned in the humanities?

(a) Do we teach values, the subject, how to cope with society, or something called a general education, the equivalent for mass education of the old education of a gentleman?

(b) What is a proper curriculum?

2. How can the humanities adapt to the needs and pressures of mass education?

3. Is modernism dead? If so, what has taken its place?

4. Is the avant-garde dead? Do we have a real or pseudo avant-garde today?

5. Is elite or high culture a thing of the past? What is the relation of mass or popular culture to elite or high culture?

6. How can we assess or describe the present period in the arts?

7. Is there a tradition, a variety of traditions in the arts? How can they be identified?

8. What is the proper meaning of the idea of relevance? Is there any sense in which the humanities can be expected to be relevant to the contemporary scene?

9. How can we reform the state of teaching and research in the humanities? Can we encourage and reward an academic elite?

10. What role can foundations play in improving the situation of the humanities?

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Steven Marcus

NOTES ON SOME PROBLEMS IN THE HUMANITIES TODAY

For the purposes of convenience, I will assume what is not true—namely that we all know what the humanities are, what they consist of, are in agreement about how to define and describe them, and can begin our discussion from this point of consensus. There are reasons to be found that account for the circumstance that none of this is true; but they are complex, and this is probably not the occasion to bring them forward. I will also assume that our purpose here today is to be suggestive and stimulating rather than persuasive and conclusive; that we want to open up discussion, speculation and argument and not bring them to a close or even to a conclusion. Hence in what follows, I will not try to render every point in a formal demonstration and will not try to deliver a tightly-knit or closely-structured argument, but will rely on the good will of all involved to take these remarks within the context of our common purpose.

One useful way of discussing the humanities is to regard them as an institution. In this sense one of their many functions has to do with the past, with its preservation, perpetuation and modification. They do so by reason of the special attention they give to books and to what is written, to the written record, the *litera scripta* which are their special instrument. It is probably only a small exaggeration to say that without the humanities we would have no past; at least we would have no history—for the multifold activities out of which the complex and ambiguous notion of history is constituted are activities that belong with special force to what we think of as the humanities. So regarded the humanities seem to have or to exercise special custodial functions;

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and indeed they have traditionally been thought of primarily if not exclusively in this custodial role.

Yet this cosy, domestic, unexciting and unproblematic conception comes apart in our hands as soon as we begin to examine it seriously. As far as I know, it was St. Augustine who first observed that time is a three-fold present: the present as we experience it, the past as a present memory, and the future as a present expectation. Moreover, we normally, habitually and necessarily understand the past by projecting the present selectively back onto it. And the great works from the past remain alive in part by virtue of their extraordinary and uncanny ability to masquerade as works of the present. Let me offer an illustration from my own discipline. Thirty-five years ago the critical reputation of Charles Dickens was about as sunk as it could be. The greatest popular novelist of the last century was taken seriously by almost no one whose opinion "mattered" and was widely regarded as a kind of literary joke, one of those odd aberrations of Victorian culture. Today that situation has entirely reversed itself. Dickens is generally regarded as the greatest of English novelists and in point of imaginative power and genius as second only to Shakespeare among the galaxy of England's writers There is no secret about how this drastic alteration took place. It took place through the mediation of modern literature. It took place by way of the acculturation of Dostoevsky and Kafka, and Eliot and Joyce and Faulkner and Beckett and other writers like them. When a generation of readers had internalized the radical modernity of these writers, it suddenly became both possible and "natural" to read Dickens anew and to see in him things that had not been hinted at before. (It should also be added that although this change among readers largely took place within the academy it began, as most such changes begin, outside of it.) Among the many points to be taken here there is one that I should like to emphasize. It is important for us to note that it was precisely Dostoevsky and Kafka, and Eliot and Joyce and Faulkner and Beckett, and *not* Fannie Hurst or Hervey Allen or Pearl Buck who were the agents of this historical transformation and transformation of historical consciousness. In other words, the past returns to life and retains its life—in some degree at least—by virtue of the model from the present that we impose upon it in those efforts of reconstruction and re-creation that are known as understanding. A correlate of this circumstance is that the model from the present that we choose has to be

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the right one, has to be itself central to some kind of vital understanding of the present, before our application of it to the past can yield much that is satisfactory. Moreover, the likelihood that the model from the present that we apply will be itself taken from a present that existed about thirty years before is, especially in the case of academic humanists, quite high. At the same time, we should bear in mind that there is at least one theoretical tradition—the tradition associated in Europe with Hegel and Marx—that self-consciously tries to incorporate within itself the movement of history. And if we should bear this in mind then we should bear in mind as well an opposing consideration: Nietzsche once observed that the business of interpretation is constituted out of violations, adjustments, abridgements, omissions and substitutions. These are minor criminal activities, and it is refreshing to be reminded that if we are all inescapably involved in illicit dealings we ought at least to be responsible enough to commit the right crime. These are problems of central importance for the humanities, and we shall return to them later.

When we turn to the humanities as part of education, we find similar circumstances. In the nineteenth century, for example, "humanism" or "the humanities" implied primarily a classical education, an education in the literature and history of Greece and Rome, or in the cultures of antiquity. This curriculum itself involved a differential series of projections back onto the past, since it derived in the first instance from the Renaissance ideal of the courtier, who was supposed to be educated to become a ruler by having all his capacities developed in due proportion and harmony. This ideal was in time modified, and by the nineteenth century the courtier had been replaced by the gentleman, who was to receive a similar kind of education and to be trained for similar public or social functions. In both situations we can observe the past being interpreted and re-structured by the selective projection of a model from the present back onto it. This model came in time to be regarded as narrow and inadequate. It was narrow in the sense that it represented class interests, and inadequate in the sense that it left out a large and growing range of subjects that had to do with both man and the world man made. Figures such as Matthew Arnold recognized such shortcomings and tried to broaden and extend this traditional educational ideal, and defend it against the attack being made by the successful new adherents of the

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natural sciences and the educational ideals that were associated with the practice of science.

These developments were taking place at the same time as there emerged into consciousness the spiritual crisis of the later nineteenth century, and were connected at various points with that crisis. In the progressive, irreversible loss among the educated classes of religious belief, substitutes for religion were sought. And someone like Arnold believed that in the humanities—in the idea of Culture and in the study of literature, particularly the study of poetry—certain things could be found that would act to support us and help us live in ways that resembled the religious ways that were being lost. In short, the humanities became a repository of "values," a resource that one could as it were tap in time of need when certain decisions and guides to decisions were required. This questionable notion in popularized and even more questionable forms has come down to us today and is still to be met with frequently.

In America, where the literary culture never achieved the ascendancy that it did in England, the situation developed in a slightly different form. Here the term itself, "the humanities," did not come into active use until after World War I.[1] When it was used thereafter it tended to refer rather narrowly and restrictively to the study of those subjects which took as their object the activities of the past. In America the study of history—and everything with a historical perspective —had displaced the study of the classics as the central mode of training in the humanities. Yet the presuppositions of the history thus studied and taught were themselves inadequate and questionable. It was a history that tended to be without self-consciousness of itself as an activity of the present, and without self-consciousness of its own subjective biases, inclinations, and interests. It simultaneously could insist upon continuity and tradition and yet see the past as utterly distinct from the present, as radically disjoined from it. It tended to be genteel and provincial, and the model of the present that it unconsciously projected back upon the past was a present that had indeed existed fifty years earlier. The study of literature was in this connection particularly scandalous. The literature that was officially sanc-

1. John Higham, "The Schism in American Scholarship," *American Historical Review*, LXII (October, 1966), 1-21.

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tioned for university study came to an end somewhere before or around 1900, and the methods of study were equally constrained. In their custodial work, the professors of literature dealt with both the past and literature as dead letters.

This situation did not go without challenge from both within the university and from outside. The internal challenge is to be located in the development of what we now call the social sciences. Following World War I, they split themselves off from the humanities—both organizationally as well as in methods pursued and subjects studied—and began to enter their own phenomenal period of rapid growth and development. Most humanists still don't understand what happened. The challenge from the outside began to exist even before World War I and had in general to do with the coming into existence of that great cultural movement that is widely and sometimes loosely known as modernism. This movement in all the arts contained within itself some of the greatest creative figures in the history of the West. It tended self-consciously to represent itself as radically breaking with the past, both the literary-cultural and the social past, and indeed it often did. (The deep continuities that also existed between the chief creative figures of modernism and the great creative figures who were their predecessors were at first invisible—so powerful was the impression of newness that they made.)

The university-based caretakers inclined as a whole to resist as long as possible these barbarians at the gates. But by the time World War II came along and brought about changes inside and outside the university that were beyond anyone's control resistance was no longer feasible or profitable. The humanities at large adapted themselves to the new hordes of beneficiaries of the G. I.Bill of Rights, and at the same time decided to embrace and internalize the modernist achievements—at just the moment when that movement was about to go into liquidation. (They are still doing it today. Many English departments embrace the New Criticism as if it had just been invented, as if *Practical Criticism* and *Seven Types of Ambiguity* had not been around for almost fifty years. This is not intended to detract from the extraordinary value of both works. It does suggest something about the confined views that tend to dominate English departments. The barbarities that are committed in other disciplines I leave for others to identify.) That there was a certain inevitable historical comedy about

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all this should not detract us from recognizing at the same time some of the important results that were connected with this development. The internalization of the modernist movement—that is, the inclusion of the great works of modern art and thought—within the humanities in the university, however belated and inadequate the process may have been, led to a general re-interpretation and re-evaluation of parts of the past; the example I provided at the opening of these notes is only one out of many instances. Great works of art from the past persist because of their ability to generate new meanings among successive groups of readers or spectators in time. In history new perspectives keep occurring; these are turned upon the great works from the past, and new or other meanings appear in the same objects. The effect of turning the modern onto the past was to bring the past back to life in a new way. However tardy and insufficient the concerted activity might have been, real benefits accrued within the humanities and within the university at large—which also began to include within itself fugitives and refugees from the worlds of the avant-garde, the modern, and the bohemian, its erstwhile enemies and *bêtes noires.* It even included *Partisan Review.*

Yet if we step back and from the perspective of the present look at what the humanities today are doing and what they are like, things do not appear to have followed the generally improved and pleasant path that might be logically inferred from the foregoing remarks. For other forces both within the university and without also were at work. The picture in the humanities today is very different from what it might have appeared to be twenty years ago. For example, if we think of research and of teaching and of the relation or disrelation of the two and of the relation of both to the conception that humanists have of themselves, certain observations may be advanced. In the humanities, as in other scholarly areas, the exponential growth of knowledge has led once again to the increasing growth of specialization, to intense specialization. It is a truism that scholars today tend to know more and more about less and less. Yet this particular narrowness bears with peculiar acuteness upon the humanities in which it tends to be true that important problems, involving real issues and real people, can rarely, if ever, be solved within the boundary lines by which the academic study of human affairs is professionally fragmented. Moreover, it is especially important that the humanities de-

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vote themselves to important problems rather than trivia. It would be false to say that the humanities today are in a violent state of crisis —they are too diverse and diffuse for that—but they are undeniably experiencing a loss of self-confidence. Increasingly the parameters of social change are being set by technological and scientific innovations, while explanations for human action are increasingly being provided in the light of the statistical findings and the behavioral assumptions of the social scientists. In consequence, the social and cultural role of the humanities, and of the humanist, appears once again to be shrinking, as the area of values and of art seem to be contracting, while the importance of the cultural traditions of the past—and of maintaining them—appear once more to be diminishing.[2]

Humanists in the university tend to be more or less aware of such circumstances. Yet something else has happened as well that is even more difficult to define and speak about with precision. There is a general sense that something has in fact happened, but it is difficult to articulate it clearly. It is even difficult to locate closely its occurrence in time or the appearance of its occurrence in consciousness. My nearest guess is that this consciousness began to surface in the mid-nineteen-fifties. The first form it took was that modernism, the modernist movement, was over: the great figures were mostly dead; and in addition there was a sense that it had realized itself almost as fully as any other complex set of projects in the history of art and culture. But after a while another sense began to make itself felt. Something else appeared to have come to an end or to be coming to an end as well. We don't have a name for it in America, although they do have a name for it in Europe, as they also have had the phenomenon in its fullness. In Europe it is known as bourgeois culture, and has been known by this name for a long time. In America we call its equivalent high culture, but they aren't the same thing. And what we have begun to be aware of is that the modernist movements in literature and art and thought seem to have been the final phases of bourgeois or high culture. And they were never more so than when they were most adversary, critical, apparently subversive and elitist—obscure, hieratic, mystagogical, outrageous. They were the positive fruits of that culture, even when and especially when they were negating it.

2. I have annexed much of this paragraph from Lawrence Stone.

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What has occurred since is something else again. When a phase of culture comes to an end or to a kind of end, it does not simply vanish and leave not a wrack behind. What it usually does is to go into a state of decomposition. It is that state that we are passing through now. We are, I believe, in the midst of the beginning of the decomposition of bourgeois culture, or of high culture, or whatever it is that we want to call that phase of culture that accompanied the development of capitalism—industrial and then advanced capitalism—in the West until 1950, or thereabouts. Regarded in this context, certain other recent developments begin to make slightly more sense, or at least seem slightly more coherent. It may still be that our perception of these changes surpasses the means at our disposal to express them or deal with them analytically. This kind of discrepancy has occurred often enough in the past for us to be aware of it as a constraint imposed not by means of our personal inadequacies alone; it is a constraint imposed by the situation as well.

As the modernist phase of culture began to decompose, one of the effects first visible was the rapid diffusion of the decomposed elements of modernism throughout the larger culture and society. This diffusion was made possible by the technologies of mass production and mass consumption characteristic of advanced industrial society. The mass market for this quasi-new culture brought the culture industry into even greater prominence than it had occupied before. The "Culture Industry" is a term coined by Horkheimer and Adorno of the Frankfurt School, and it refers quite simply to those large institutions in modern society which are devoted to the industrial production of culture for mass consumption. (In the 19th century it was often urged that religion had to be a "marketable commodity"; in this sense Arnold was right, and culture in the 20th century is at this level of analysis the structural equivalent of religion in the 19th.) According to Horkheimer and Adorno, the culture industry tends in the images it creates and sends out to reproduce the surface of everyday life. It is essentially uncritical and tends to integrate its audience or clients into the social world as it is and to consolidate the present structure of domination.

There is clearly much to be said in qualification of this argument and diagnosis. For example, there can be no doubt that the diffusion of certain elements of modernism throughout parts of the larger

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culture has had the effect of selectively raising the level and improving the quality of some cultural activities—one thinks of a number of movies and of certain kinds of popular music at once. One thinks as well of the increase in the last thirty years of the number of Americans who have had the opportunity to experience higher education, however woefully bad that education may be.[3] For these groups the level of the cultural floor, so to speak, has been lifted; at the same time they have become a new mass market for the culture industry; from its point of view they are a new mass of consumers to be served, serviced, and/or exploited as the case may be.

An obvious illustration of a number of these circumstances is to be found in what is or was called the counter culture. Its conception of itself included the notions that it represented a real challenge and threat to the authority of contemporary society and culture, and that it would subvert them on all sides, not the least of which was their exploitative sides, which it would expose and discredit. The counter culture itself was put together in large measure out of certain of the decomposed elements of late bourgeois and early modern culture. Fragments of the young Marx's analysis of alienation were knocked onto fragments of Freud's analysis of repression and the inhibitory nature of culture as we know it to produce a doctrine of "liberation." Authority was to be assaulted and overthrown by the spontaneous expression of impulse. This diffuse and unfocused activism was augmented by certain other impulses. Fragments of nineteenth-century communitarian experiments were disinterred and dusted off and fused with fragments chipped off the great ancient cultures of the East—i.e. these fragments were themselves decomposed elements of cultures that are themselves in a state of decomposition. Such things still linger on. For example, one voice in the current embroilment over ecology reminds us that the West will never be able to solve its ecological problems until it adopts "the truth of Zoroastrianism . . . that we are all of one stuff, difference is only in degree, and God can be conceived as being in all and of all, the sublime and divine immanence." Zoroaster! Zarathustra! BOUM! If that is the case we had better start looking for another planet, not merely another culture.[4]

3. In California today, for example, and for the first time in history, more than half the age group between 18 and 21 go to college.

4. The foregoing passage is indebted for a number of its formulations to Norman Birnbaum.

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The counter culture, in addition, was co-opted by the culture industry and became itself a marketable commodity, an article for consumption. The experimental life-styles it appeared could be tried on, bought and sold, like new hair styles. Its heroes, often passing ephemerally through late youth, could be sold as quickly as they could be materialized; and the speed with which such changes in taste and allegiance occurred were commensurate with the speed of technological change that the culture industry needs and promotes. As Harold Rosenberg has aptly noted: "reputations are now being made in art as fast as on Broadway and in Hollywood. . . . The speedup in history-making has now reached the point where the interval of critical evaluation seems to have become superfluous." The counter culture, which started out as a protest against the culture of consumption, and the imperatives of such a culture to reproduce itself, largely expressed its refusal on the level of appearance. The repudiation that was its project took the form of changes in style—first as a kind of non-style and then not so paradoxically as a reproducible style. Latent and widespread dissatisfaction among members of the society at large, registered at first particularly among the young, were articulated by this style; the model was found to be appealing as a means of representing or asserting restlessness and discontent. In this connection the counter culture found an only too eager ally in an industry looking for further avenues of growth and expansion. It was in this way that the counter culture itself became oriented toward consumption, became a commodity and was in turn consumed. It was also self-consuming and vanished into itself, like the smoke of grass deeply inhaled. There were many attractive impulses in this movement and many attractive people as well. But they did not subvert or even finally outrage the society they had set out to undo and liberate. They were put to use, and there is very little left of them now.

The situation at present, therefore, is even more naked and mystifying—if not mystified—than a present cultural situation usually is. With modernism over, the era of high culture seems to have come to an end. Nothing of similar weight or structure has replaced it, and nothing seems in the near future likely to. This puts the humanists in the university in a position that is even more vulnerable and exposed than their ordinary one. As I have suggested earlier the model of the present that humanists normally impose upon the past in their efforts of explanation and interpretation is by and large from thirty to fifty

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years behind-hand—although the general speedup has tended to shrink that lag or interval as well. What will happen when there is no movement—such as modernism—to provide the kind of conceptual coherence that academic humanists, and others, seem to require is another matter altogether. I think, however, that it is probably warranted to make a kind of negative prediction. It is likely that academic humanists will more or less continue to be unprepared and will continue to lack the confidence to teach the one thing they ought to be qualified and competent to do—to instruct their students in the reasoned criticism of their own history and culture and its traditions. Yet this crisis does not belong to them alone; it is part of a much wider set of circumstances.

The foregoing discussion is not of course meant to be a dismissal of everything that is going on today. Almost every situation of decomposition contains within itself the seeds of new developments —though it is difficult if not impossible to see what new currents or directions will emerge from the welter of talents currently in view. What I have been doing is relating the current state of the humanities to certain of the dominant moods outside of the academy and within the arts and critical thinking.

Nevertheless, this negative prediction is not necessarily fatalistic. Analysis of the problems that beset the humanities also suggests what is needful: namely an active attempt on the part of the humanities to achieve through the processes of self-clarification an improved and *informed consciousness of the present and their relationship to it.* It is in this way that relationships to the past—even and especially in their discontinuities—begin to emerge out of semi-consciousness; and it is in this way as well that the humanities can begin consciously to participate in the working through of the present.

For example, there is the widespread sense among humanists in the university that they are not merely treated as second class citizens but that they actually are second class citizens. (Let us leave to one side the interesting question of whether they have earned or merited this status.) This generalized sense of demoralization has many sides to it, but one of those sides accurately represents and is a response to changes in the character of education. The university and higher education as a whole have become auxiliary institutions of production. In this connection it has to be noted that the humanities nor-

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mally neither produce use nor exchange values, nor do they train human beings to produce them in turn. What they actually do in terms of this newly emerging context of the university as part of the system of production is precisely a project upon which self-clarification and working through are required.[5]

Something similar is to be observed in the current intense interest in "values" and in the crises out of which such interest has arisen. There is an undercurrent of expectation that the humanities are or should go into the business of creating values, new or old, for society. This circumstance deserves intense and rigorous examination. The expectation in question envisages striking resemblances to what is known in the social sciences as a "technological fix." A "value fix" accordingly would assume that the present social and cultural crises can be met by finding a short-cut route of somehow providing or promoting new values. This view regards the humanities as being in the business of supplying a value-technology for society. A "value fix" in effect assumes that the "solution" of cultural and social problems does not consist in real solutions of such problems in their proper realms and by the actual people involved, but that such solutions can, as it were, be applied from the outside. The idea that the humanities should become involved in the production of values as social or cultural commodities means that they should be engaged not in the activities of clarification and self-clarification, but rather that they be primarily engaged in an important aspect of the mental management of society and history. Apart from the question of whether this should be the proper role for the humanities now or in the future, one should recall that this was in general the path that the established social sciences chose to pursue, and that their way has been increasingly strewn with boulders. As the humanities undertake in this difficult period the correspondingly difficult task of self-examination, such questions have to be kept in the forefront of consciousness. If the work of critical self-clarification and appraisal can help to begin to create and keep in the open a vision of the present in its continuities

5. As Christopher Lasch has reminded me, it isn't quite precise to sever the humanities so peremptorily from the production of use values and exchange values. The humanities have had over the past two decades important relations with the knowledge industry—which is itself the principal agent (and beneficiary) of the diffusion of the decomposed elements of modernism throughout the larger culture and society that I have referred to.

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and discontinuities with both the past and the future, the purpose and usefulness of the humanities will become sufficiently clear.

II

The foregoing series of remarks may be regarded as a kind of substantive problematic. It is only one of several that might be put forward, and it can be dealt with from a variety of perspectives in almost unlimited ramifications. In the light of the present discussion I should like to add the following observations and suggestions in order to bring my part of our discourse—if not to a conclusion then to a stop.

As for humanists themselves, I have been implying all along what I will now at the risk of hyperbole undertake to state directly. It seems to me that there exists today a widespread if quasi-conscious doubt among humanists about whether in fact they have a culture to transmit. This doubt may be only partly articulated, but it is not to be confused with the poised and critical skepticism that characterizes the humanist tradition at its moments of strength. This kind of doubt may express itself differently at different levels of the system of higher education and in the society and culture at large, but it is distinctly perceptible among the elite groups at the great universities and the larger cultural enclaves with which they are symbiotically connected. If in fact humanists cannot sustain their belief in the value of the culture they have inherited—and which is professionally within their care—or in the value of its values both immanent and overt, then it seems to me to follow that they will be severely hindered in arriving at judgments and decisions about priorities within their own disciplines and judgments and decisions about allocations of resources in both research and teaching—about curriculum, the structure of advanced degrees and other internal matters—not to speak about judgments and decisions that pertain to the substance of their own continuing work and vocation.

The belief that seems to be passing, as I have said, is the belief in the intrinsic or transcendent value of a historical culture and in the intrinsic and transcendent values that attach to the activities by which it is sustained, transmitted, reproduced, internalized, and modified. The erosion of such beliefs undermines the humanities in particular if

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for no other reason than that in them the teaching function is extremely intimate and peculiarly vital. We may hence ask what is the essential role of the humanities in the production system of a technobureaucratic order whose dominant values are characteristically expressed in forms of utilities and commodities? What is their essential or overriding role in the culture of such an order?

Clearly that role is still custodial and transmissive and has largely to do with activities of education. These activities tend to differ in aim, quality and effectiveness at the different levels of our system of higher education; but at all levels they are profoundly influenced by social changes and decisions of every kind. The massive Federal support of higher education in America provides us all with unavoidable instances of such decisions. Federal policy decisions, in this context, are tantamount to interventions and have a profound effect on particular disciplines, institutions and even larger parts of the system. I think it is fair to say that in this context humanists have not begun to do their homework, and that most work in the humanities continues to go on without self-reflection on this and related scores.

Yet even in this state certain pertinent questions are beginning to be asked. If the humanities comprise those disciplines in which values—along with language and history—are central and inseparable from the problematics of the disciplines themselves, then what is the value of such values? Can they be reduced to easily exchangeable units of satisfaction, such as dollars—as they can be in such monolithic social systems as armies or large business organizations? After all, humanistic research does not produce "results" that are comparable to those arrived at in applied science, social science or technology. Nor does humanistic education produce "results" in the sense that technical training or preparing students for employment normally does. Nevertheless, it seems to me unavoidable that humanists will have to prepare themselves in the near future to answer with some adequacy the questions that the foregoing assertions fend off and negate. Can training or education in the humanities be compared to preparation for employment or technical training—can such training and education be, as it were, commodity-weighted? If not, then what are the functions of the humanities, the humanistic disciplines—in terms of our current actuality, in terms of the role they are now being asked to play, and in terms of the role that we think they should in point of fact

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and reason play? These questions cannot be answered without a fuller understanding of large-scale social developments in the present, and this brings us together in our predicament with the social scientists again.

What contribution if any can the humanities be expected to make as we begin to face such problems? Matthew Arnold was wrong when he asserted that culture and literature would and could take the place of religion. But Arnold was also right when he observed that another central function of what we call the humanities today was the critical function. The humanities at their best represent the critical tradition in our society and culture. That critical tradition must be renewed and recruited in every generation and as society continues to change, to produce itself in new forms. The critical tradition can only function successfully by reason of its aliveness and attentiveness to the world of the present and so continually clarifying itself and the past. It is the skills and habits of thought associated with this tradition that make up in great part whatever the strength of the humanities may be, and it is such qualities of mind, I should like to suggest, that ought to be brought to bear upon the larger questions that are before us here. For good or bad the locus of that tradition is now almost exclusively within the university, and many of the difficulties that face us have to do with finding appropriate means for keeping that tradition alive, bringing it forward and making it felt and effective in the troubled world both within the university and outside it that we all inhabit today. Without the presence of such a critical tradition and the awareness it stimulates into vivid activity, humanistic studies and education run a double risk. On the one hand, in the great elite universities, they run the risk of becoming elaborate exercises in co-optation, systematic means whereby the existing social-cultural order uncritically and unwittingly reproduces itself. On the other, in the middle and lower reaches of the vast American system of higher education, they run the risk (if they have not already succumbed to it) of simply becoming conduits for the further diffusion of debased fragments and decomposed remnants of what was once a great if corrupt bourgeois-modern social and cultural tradition. These risks are most acutely apparent in literary studies and in the teaching of literature in America today, but they are there in the other humanistic enterprises as well.

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Richard Poirier

A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY: LITERATURE AND THE HUMANITIES

No one can claim to have been "right" over the past decade on the issues of education, literary studies, popular culture, and the relation of these to the society we live in. Within the last decade, anyone with a conscience ought to have hoped and worked and agitated for a revision of education and a redefinition of culture in the interests of human needs and hopes which everyone knows to have been neglected. And within the present decade anyone with a conscience needs to recognize that the effort has failed. It failed because it defined itself within the very traditions it should have more radically and toughmindedly assessed and attacked.

The sixties offered a great historical opportunity. It was one of those rare periods when certain minorities came at last to make a demand upon culture, and had the demand been properly responded to and then properly directed, our sense of what culture is capable of including might well have been enormously enriched. Minorities of course means blacks, it also means youths—since any generation demanding recognition for youth culture (a rare thing ever to have happened) was, as it passed on into maturity, a very small minority indeed. Minorities also means women who look upon themselves as having been historically repressed. It means that element in humanity, be it "feminine," or "black," or "young," which feels that it has not sufficiently registered its presence on the dominant tempo and quality of our national life. Minorities also means those areas of popular culture, especially in film, music, dance, even sports, which, even while they have always demanded much of our attention, have gotten very little of our powers of analysis or articulate appreciation, so little, that they have as yet not been sufficiently accounted for in our characterizations of what we

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mean by "culture." More generally, by minority I mean those aspects of minority feeling in all of us, including the most privileged: whatever we care deeply about but which, culturally or politically we have been made ashamed of, including our sexuality. I would even describe as a minority feeling the fascination for machines and gadgets, the love of the rocket, you might say, which is held altogether too much in check by the close order drill, especially in literature, against the machine and against technology as threats to something called the literary imagination.

Some of us were not disturbed by the likelihood that under the pressure of these new demands for attention literature would probably come to count for something less in the scheme of things, especially the scheme of things laid down by most departments of literature. Counting for less needn't have meant the demeaning of literature, the drumming out of "Lycidas" or Henry James; instead it might have meant, and still might, that literature was to be only one of the artifacts, rather than the only artifact, that could be intensely read as a clue to the state of the culture and a preparation for coping with it. Because if literature was to be thought of as the disposition (in every sense of that term) of the materials that culture has made available to us, then it had become evident, after the heady days of what is called "lit crit" in the forties and fifties, that there were many other ways in which some of these same materials were now being disposed of, film being preeminently one of them, taped interviews being another, and both of these showing signs of life in the past decade more vibrant than any to be found in all but a few novels or plays or volumes of poetry.

It was almost immediately apparent, however, that most of those who agreed that literature had come to count for less in the sixties were not prepared to let it remain, in the form of its classics, what it had demonstrated itself to be: still the most disciplined and at once the most gregarious of expressions, and therefore the one which might continue to offer, as a subject of study, the best opportunity for finding our way among the signs and codes and structures of historical life. Sensing the exposure of literature to competition from other forms of expression and the possibility that the study of literature might in some instances prove irrelevant to an understanding of those other forms, the radical contingent of literary people reached a pecu-

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liarly trivial series of conclusions. The nature of their attack upon literary hierarchies was for the most part lacking in any sort of Marxist rigor or penetration. It was without methodology or ideological substance; it derived largely from grossly quantitative measures having to do with racial, sexual, and political inclusiveness and from the most benighted kind of humanistic blather about the attitude on these matters which literature ought to induce.

The situation as it has evolved in no way discredits the earlier hopes of quite different eventualities, and the disaster will be compounded if those who smugly and defensively resisted any possibilities of radical change are now allowed merely to perpetuate some of the scandalously puffy and lethargic educational practices that derive from sedated assumptions about the nature of high culture and of what constitutes an education in the humanities. Given developments since World War II in technology, the perspectives of scientific inquiry, including inquiry into human sexual responses, given especially the developments in the transmissions of styles, literature does indeed count for less, and for good reason. Never before in human history could a painter or a sculptor or a musician or a writer have simultaneously available so many diverse, compelling, and authentic styles. Capacities for the reproduction of sounds and images, and the quality and availability of prints, can make a studio in the most remote village more inclusive than any number of the museums or music halls that were once the only place where an artist could learn what he needed to know. These factors alone have saturated the mind in a variety of styles. As a consequence there has been a diffusion of those continuities and inheritances by which literature and the other arts have heretofore made themselves recognizable as such. Readings of culture are necessarily ignorant when we cannot also read technology. It is unlikely, as Richard Gilman has pointed out, that even violence in film is a result of changed tastes and the loss of moral standards; it might instead be ascribed to a change in what the camera and what techniques for makeup allow a movie director to do. There's plenty of evidence from old fight movies, gangster movies, and cartoons that the will to violence was always there; technology has now provided the way. We can't "read" the shapes of culture in literature, we can't read them anywhere without enormously greater learning than literature alone requires, and yet the radical critique, at least in the great majority of

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instances, has supposed that we can get along being more rather than less ignorant than we were under a predominantly literary dispensation. I doubt that anyone who is ignorant of technology can know what is going on in a great writer like Thomas Pynchon. It might help in reading *Gravity's Rainbow* to have read Rilke, but to understand the form of that novel, the movements and intensification of its style, one has to have a feeling for the movies, know something about their development out of still photography, and be able to see the relation of all this to principles of acceleration that are essential both to film and rocketry.

What had been called for, of course, was not the mere documentation of how styles combined one with the other, but a sense of wonder at the results, a surge of concentrated critical attention and care, the kind of attention which prompts the simple question "what, in the face of these new combinations, is happening to *me?*" Rock music, as a phenomenon of performance, simply needed and still needs to be inquired into. There was a rumor, for example, that I was teaching a course in rock at Rutgers. It was reported back to me as an accusation, when in fact I'd never have taught such a course simply because I'm not capable of doing so. I knew at least that much about it. It proved impossible, but it was necessary nonetheless, to wonder whether or not what is called "rock" could even be described. Was it to be done by an analysis of lyrics? or by an analysis of music? the latter being, in certain instances, as complicated in its sources, derivations, and traditions, as any lyrical or musical text very well could be. And what did amplification have to do with it? And how much was "rock" a matter of performance in concert with an excited audience, or at a festival, or at home, and what about the kind of equipment it was played on? What, especially, about the technicians whose function, in many instances, was as decisive as the men and women playing the instruments and singing? Very often a piece heard on a record turned out to have been the product of most elaborate splicings made from perhaps ten or fifteen playings of the piece, and sometimes the instruments were recorded separately so that any guess as to the effect of group activity on individual performance could be no more than wild speculation.

If "rock" was something in which students were natively interested and could show some expertness, then here was an opportunity

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to explore in class some extraordinarily important things about what might seem to them a wholly new idea of self-expression in a popular art. Perhaps they could be shown that it wasn't a new idea at all; perhaps it could be called a kind of neo-classical revival. How could any effect be traced back to a performer in something so arranged, so electronically managed? Perhaps the genre was at last all, but what and where were the outlines of the genre? Who was responsible for a given song? And if young listeners instinctively knew the answer—Well, really no one—then perhaps this was an aspect of their feeling that no one was responsible for much of anything, that responsibility was not only an antiquated but a perverse idea especially in the arts and learning? The implications of technology in the popular arts could be shown to have some consequences not only in matters of academic plagiarism but more importantly in the assessment of political, moral responsibility.

"Rock" is only an example of an opportunity for criticism that could have been picked up and developed to some profit only outside existing departments of literature or of the humanities. Nothing very much happened; the young aficionados were themselves oblivious even to the strangeness of the thing they liked so much. Hence when faced with the eventual horrors of the rock festival, a magazine like *Rolling Stone* was wholly incapable of understanding how difficult it was to know what any of it meant. Much the same goes for film, the poverty of criticism in this area being notorious, or for the historic deficiencies in the criticism of ballet, where only now is there a decent general response to the genius of Balanchine. The same charge can be made about Black Studies and Women's Studies and Gay Studies. Insofar as these are very widely adapted to the academic curriculum, they are in conception and the way they're managed no better than the dreariest forms of thematic or sociological criticism. Why, it must be asked, must Black Studies or Women's Studies or Gay Studies belong to literary departments at all except for accidents, budgetary convenience, or reasons having to do with quite unjustified assumptions about the continued centrality of literature to all emergent cultural, social, and political problems.

There has been this vast increase in the demands made upon the study of the arts in order that it might include attention to minority culture, popular culture, and the politics of culture, and the most

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conspicuous consequence in all cases has been if anything regressive. The past few years have witnessed not only a failure of efforts to make literature serve something like Black Studies, but a deterioration in the quality of literary study itself under the pressure of its having to become, in packaged and tiresome ways, so readily available and topical. The good reasons why literature and literary study have come to count for less are now inseparable from the bad reasons. Leaders in the movement for the study of popular culture and minority culture have chosen to be intimidated by the political constituencies they represent as well as by the academic ones they pretend to oppose. As a result they have failed to serve either of them well and have patronized both. Instead of insisting on the special difficulty of their task—which was well beyond the difficulties of the kind of literary studies pedagogically in vogue during the fifties and sixties—they chose to make literary studies the focus of popular culture and minority culture and in consequence had to adulterate and simplify all of them. Not having asked any of the right and complicated questions about the new media, these enthusiasts could scarcely be expected to ask the right and complicated questions about literature. There has been a retreat from the frontiers at which inquiry might have started, and there is now going on a mere scavenger hunt of literary sociologizing, psychologizing, politicizing, and the collecting of motifs and types.

The agitations in the late sixties did not come to much of anything, but the targets—the conventional form of English Studies and the hierarchies of the profession—were the right ones. They remain, now, in the self-satisfactions of their survival, the right targets still. In fact, the failure of the radical movement is that it chose to exploit and to be exploited by the established economy of literary studies; it allowed itself to do nothing more than continue in the pattern of inflation which has always characterized literary studies in the United States. It is important to recognize this as part of a larger recognition, namely that literary studies has very few traditions to return to, with the profitable limits these would imply. This does not mean that literary studies has been without productive and healthy periods—like the great scholarly achievements of the thirties and forties and the new critical response which accompanied and followed it—but these were meant to correct historical inadequacies. Once having fulfilled their

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purpose they became, when translated into pedagogy, increasingly mechanical and sometimes prejudicial to certain kinds, notably to Romantic literature. Still, there have also been some extraordinary masters, and some impressive efforts in certain colleges and universities to create sensible curriculum against the dead weight of entrenched interests. Some things can indeed be summoned up as possible clues to a future, but nothing that constitutes a firm tradition, nothing most people can agree on as properly defining (and confining) the dimensions of the subject. Very few can even agree on what those dimensions ought to be. The very nature of the literary-humanities enterprise doesn't allow that. And because there is so little agreement about what literary studies is and what it should or should not be responsible for, the subject swells and contracts with the season. The developments of the past decade, the uncertainty of the present one, and the serious doubts everyone feels about the profession of literary studies can only be profitably considered if those interested in it see that where it now finds itself is to a great extent where it has always been. The difference is that the evidences of an always incipient illness are now easier to see; if the enterprise is to move on to anything better we must know where it has been.

It is necessary always to remember that when we think of the study of literature we are, or ought to be, thinking not only of an operation on the barricades of western culture, but also of puzzling out a reading list, planning a class, grading papers, and the like. The issue of the proper relation between popular and high culture, the supposed retreat from rationality and intellect, the attacks against trendiness, the debate about the status of Black, Third World, and Women's literature, the claims of the sciences, especially of psychoanalysis, in matters where "the literary imagination" has been imagined dominant, the omens for literature in the vogue of literary self-consciousness and self-parody, both of which may be derivatives of a certain kind of literary study—all of these issues are indeed of large historical consequence, and it is hard to think of an English department seriously considering the nature of its curriculum without having to discuss one or all of them.

Indeed it could be argued that literary culture does largely depend on the technologies which serve it and the principal technology is the operation of departments of English. This is probably a fair

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statement of the case, and the virtues of stating it in this particular way, with the designation of organized literary studies as a technology, is that it might help to make our language about the issues less fevered, less pretentious, less self-serving, less inspired with the idea that the study of literature is equivalent to literature itself and that literature is equivalent to culture, much less the humanities. The way any profession is talked about by its practitioners is as important as what is done in it, especially in the effect of that talk on others. It is better to err on the side of modesty since much of the trouble with literary-cultural studies is the result of its having, through most of this century, erred on the side of excess.

The usefulness of calling the profession of English Studies a technology may be arguable, but there can be no doubt that for good or ill literary culture has never in the past been so dependent on the decisions made, at a technical level, in departments of English. By using the word technology I mean to insist upon how apparently technical most of these crucial decisions are and how very mundane matters prove to be more important than most of us have been led to believe. Take the syllabuses of a given number of courses. These are absolutely central in establishing the hierarchies of literary values for a generation of students; in maybe the majority of cases the syllabus determines which books of poetry, for example, will go on to grace the family shelves in years to come. Literary history and history itself, as it can be read in literature, derive increasingly from the reading lists of courses, and these, in turn, are a reflection of the dominant methodologies, or ideologies, in any given English department. A teacher chooses one book rather than another for a class because he or she knows how to teach it, or because he or she has been taught it well in graduate school or as an undergraduate. Some books and authors of the present century would probably never have come to be called "major" had they depended on the free play of taste by that literate but, when it came to English and American literature, untutored audience who determined such matters up to the first decade of this century. In the operations of a free market, a market undirected by the massive enterprise of the classroom study of literature, it is unlikely that *Moby Dick,* the later James, *Ulysses,* Eliot, Pound, or Stevens would have attained anything like the place in the history of literature which they now hold, a place in some of these instances

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equivalent to Dickens or Tennyson. Or consider the enormous importance of classroom anthologies designed for that mass sale which is the dream of anyone who has edited such a book. The effect of these on establishing the relative standings of writers and the lines of force in literary history is in all likelihood predominant.

It is probably therefore impossible to talk intelligently about the shape of contemporary literary culture, especially since there are those who take this to mean culture itself, without knowing something about the curriculum of English Studies, its permutations, and its growth. The technologies of English Studies—its methods for selecting certain materials out of the mass presented to it, its techniques for assembling and coordinating and disposing of these materials—have been the means of hoarding enormous cultural authority. And this has gone along with the assumption that English Studies has the right always to grow, like other largely American inventions. If growth has seemed like manifest destiny to most English departments, and perhaps it is, there are nonetheless problems which result from it. These belong, I'd like to insist again, to the history of the profession, and not to the agitations of any caucus or to the demands of any group.

Given the fact that English departments are supposed to be responsible for the language, isn't it in the nature of that responsibility that they should also become the unofficial custodians of the culture? Wasn't this the case even before the English departments became imperialistic for reasons more evidently economic and having to do with the natural desire to hold on to and expand its territories within the fields of education? When Roger Ascham in the 16th century opposed the inkhornists on the grounds that they threatened to make English into a Latin patois, he was, like his ally, Sir John Cheke, defining his functions as a schoolmaster; he was doing so, however, in terms that of necessity constituted a prescription for the emerging shape of English culture. Even four centuries ago, that is, questions about which kind of English "course" was best suited to the times and to the social class and prospects of the students were also questions about the nature of culture.

Professors of English have thus understandably come to see the fuzziness on the border of their subject as if it were a gateway to power. Fiercely defensive in its nationalism, the profession is just as

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fiercely imperialistic, and the imperialism has taken the form of an inveterate trendiness. I am aware that the term "trendy" has an especially pejorative force for certain traditionalists who are usually innocent of the tradition they represent. Trendiness can be said to have created the positions now occupied by many of them. The illusion that English Studies belongs to nature, that there is ever or has ever been such a thing as an approved body of delimited material for which English Studies was solely responsible, and that certain people called scholars knew just what to do with this material—these illusions are sustained by people who are the benefactors in their positions of academic preferment of a profession which has been so much the "swinger" of the academy as to have been, over the decades, often the largest, most powerful and most popular in any given university or college. Until the early part of this century, especially in England, the mere idea of teaching literature written in one's native tongue —presumably one learned all about that at home—was thought, except in a few instances like University College London, quite "trendy" indeed. One studied the language and literature of the mother country, culturally speaking. That meant Greek and Latin for the English and consistent with that principle it was for the Americans that the study of English literature first became a widely based accredited activity. Even then it was for some time thought "trendy" in most places to offer courses in fiction, and until the thirties contemporary literature was considered unusually innovative.

But the exceptions came to prove the rule as English Studies picked up the momentum which brought it roughly to the form in which it has been recognized since 1945, the expansion since that date being implicit and predictable from the kind that preceded it. Of late, English professors have been adding to their responsibilities at a rate exorbitant when compared even with so exorbitant a past. On one side, the so-called radical faction can claim that the domain of English Studies isn't even now inclusive enough and that the literature of the past needs to be reassessed, some of it relegated to a deserved obscurity, in the light of political, psychological, and other disciplines. On the other, the traditional faction claims dominion over the culture of the past, the present, and because it claims to have found the essential continuities of culture—its potential future. They would claim, with Northrop Frye, that academic criticism has at last become a "structure

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of knowledge." The two factions might be most easily contrasted by considering the ways in which they determine how new writings qualify for inclusion into their hierarchies. The radical faction receives new writings into what is called literature by virtue of the test of political relevance, a relevance sometimes complexly conceived in the terminologies of the Freudian Left; the traditionalists do so by virtue of evidence that the new writings were made possible by those traditions which criticism has succeeded, by resourceful readings and misreadings, in delineating from within the thickets of literary forms and languages.

These rival claims are pressed with a zeal meant to suggest that they pretty much exhaust the possibilities of choice. Not everyone will agree, however, and there is a point at which the articulation of differences has become more self-serving than real. The claim of each side to centrality is enhanced rather than threatened by their common consent that all other differences within the profession can be divided between them. Each faction leans on assumptions about the nature of the material it proposes to manage—namely literature—and is committed to methodologies which severely limit the range of inquiries that can be made. Except at the level of grammar, certain kinds of close analysis (which at its best is represented by what Reuben Brower calls "slow reading"), and the procedures advanced by Northrop Frye, literary study has little semblance of critical discipline and it is probably resistant to any, at least to any one form of discipline. That is why literary study has always proved itself ultimately gregarious about what is to be included under the heading of literature. Perhaps it's the very vagueness about the nature of the discipline and the subject itself which invites dogmatizing. It is possible sometimes to feel, as one tries to do something moderately helpful in a class with a poem and a group of students, rather harassed, on the one hand, by systems and theories that do not adequately account for the human need answered by a particular poem or a particular play, much less the mystery of human responses to either, and, on the other, by demands that the poem or play or novel measure up to certain political requirements. The choice at times is between a treasure hunt with no fun allowed on the way or the critical equivalent of strip mining.

In assessing the pretentions and rationales of English Studies it is necessary to remember that the subject being professed has become

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evermore, in the precise sense of the term, grotesque. Richard Ohmann, in tracing the historical development of English departments, has contributed importantly to our understanding of this historical development. By offering certain public services and fulfilling certain clear utilitarian functions the profession has moved, stage by stage, into its present bloated affluence. Thus the old rhetoric and speech departments of the early part of the century, devoted to teaching people how to speak and write clearly—an enormously profitable business in a multi-racial country devoted to mass education—created the financial resources necessary for funding the great period of textual scholarship. The very success of this activity, perhaps as close to a measurable discipline as the profession has ever come, removed most of the need for its continuance in kind. On the way it managed also to assemble both the textual (and financial) resources necessary to such later developments as studies in the history of ideas and the emergence of appreciation and interpretation as the central activity of English Studies up to the present time. Of course this evolution cannot be as neatly compartmentalized as my description of it necessitates. What I've described as steps were at certain moments really simultaneous movements. Early on, however, each of these activities offered a practical justification for itself, pretended to answer a demonstrable need.

From this point of view the period that saw the rapid growth of interpretive appreciation was notably interesting. The problem was simply this: how does appreciation or interpretation justify itself in the way composition or speech or textual scholarship or intellectual history had so much more easily managed to do? How could it claim any of their utilitarian function and thereby earn the public and economic support needed for further growth? In the response to this problem lies much of our present difficulty. Academic purveyors of appreciation had inevitably to make the claim that literature was of enormous public importance, that the study or reading of it provided the opportunity for a comprehensive critique of society and of ideas about it. Such an assumption might properly induce caution rather than exhilaration. It is an assumption not that literary studies should have fostered but that it might more properly have tried to dispel—or at the very least to chasten.

At this point the centrality of Lionel Trilling becomes apparent.

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It derives only in part from his proposing that we might at least aspire to a condition in which Arnold's claims for the importance of literature could have a continuing force. He is most important in the restraints and skepticisms with which he advances any such propositions. So that even as he assigns enormous responsibilities to literary studies, he does so while acknowledging the likelihood that modernist literature has cracked the restraints of culture, has eluded any kind of discipline. Professor Trilling's tentativeness reveals a deep anxiety about his own activities as a critic which are the more difficult to confront for not obtruding into convenient polarities. Literature itself induces vagrancies, as he has shown, which culture in his definition of it is not able to incorporate and correct. And yet the problems which Professor Trilling encounters derive from a conviction about the possible reciprocal relationship between literature and life, literature and history, which can and especially now need to be held to an even stricter account. Thus, for me at least, the only demonstrable way in which literature seems to be related to life, especially to those disruptive impulses in contemporary life which Professor Quentin Anderson finds so disturbing, is that it shows how language and how literary forms act *by their very nature* as restraints upon such impulses. The disenchantment with modern literature and with the functions and possibilities of literary criticism since the vogue of the so-called New Criticism is in large part the result of illusions about both, illusions which, especially when sponsored by critics incapable of Professor Trilling's subtle distinctions, have been injuriously inflationary to the profession of English Studies.

It is in the context of these large expectations that one must understand Trilling's tough assessments of his own function as a critic-teacher, and his uncertainties about the possible effectiveness of either occupation. Long before the radical caucus he had the courage to ask if these were still useful, or congenial, or "relevant" occupations—though he does not lean on that catchword. But in the case of Trilling, as in the later case of the radical faction, the question of whether or not English Studies could matter always presupposes that it should matter a very great deal. And it is importantly indicative that this presupposition seldom lends itself to translation into anything like a pedagogical method.

F.R. Leavis here offers himself as a revealing and instructive

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illustration. Given the relatively compact character of English cultural institutions, Leavis could, with much greater justification than could most Americans, make claims for the importance of English Studies—English Studies, it must be remembered, in English schools. Leavis took advantage of the ascertainable and traceable relationships among the classics of English literature, English cultural institutions, historical developments, and the social usages of the English language. Leavis is characteristically a close, a detailed critic, very nuanced in his responses to local features, especially local sounds, in a piece of writing. Trilling, on the other hand, tends in his books to emphasize broader aspects of a given work and to consider style less as writing which moves in time—though he clearly gives preparatory attention to this—than as an ideological stance. Style in his criticism refers us not so much to historical circumstances as to prospects upon history like "pleasure" or "mind" or "liberalism" or "authenticity." It is understandable that Leavis is perhaps a more helpful critic for anyone setting about to teach a class; it is no wonder either that he has imitators and disciples. He has been able to illustrate his claims for the predominance of English Studies by immensely valuable tips—and let's call them that to stress their immediate usefulness—about how to set up a curriculum and how to plan a course. His *Education and the University* is probably a more valuable book now than it ever was before. It must be remembered, however, that when the Leavisian curriculum moves beyond Leavis's own, to my mind indispensable kind of practical criticism, when it gets past what would be the first couple of semesters, it expands in its concerns into areas wherein English literature mixes with English social and intellectual history. The terminologies of the one can be shown to be reciprocal with the other. Leavis's curriculum is therefore not entirely serviceable to critics and teachers concerned with American classrooms, any more than are the criteria in *The Great Tradition* very useful to an understanding or appreciation of classical American literature. When the literary classroom in America becomes historically relevant it does so most often with modern literature or with American literature or with both, since 20th century literature can be said to have begun with the works of Hawthorne and Melville.

Leavis is valuable to the American situation not because he shows us how to make literary criticism into a "relevant" activity but because

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he shows us how extremely difficult it is to do so, even under the best circumstances. If he teaches us lessons, his work also constitutes a warning, that to do his sort of thing in America and with American or contemporary materials or to do his sort of thing with English materials in American classrooms is altogether more strenuous than anything Leavis himself shows us how to do. Here Trilling's cautions are precisely directed to our special situation. It is immeasurably more difficult, that is, now and in America than it ever was for Leavis then and in England to locate any kinds of connection between literature and life, literature and social history, literature and culture, which will be revealing about both.

What is needed, now and in America, is a pedagogical method which induces the application to contemporary phenomena of some of Leavis's insistent rigor about expression and, combined with that, induces some of Trilling's insistence on the cultural burden that must be carried by anyone proposing to use literary forms, regardless of whether the person using them is black or white, a woman or a man. Without this pedagogical method—and I realize the disrepute of both the word "pedagogy" and the word "method"—the profession will continue to rely on superficially implemented Arnoldian formulas about the relation of literature to life and history. If that is the case, then there is no way in which the profession of English can resist proposed and attenuating expansions of English Studies into such areas as Black Studies or Women's Studies or sexism generally. At present, the only possible ground for opposing such expansion must be, to put the matter bluntly, class, racial, or sexual discrimination. Consider for example a black student of English who has been educated to believe, as almost all of us have been, in the formula that literature is a criticism of life, a black student who, under the stimulus of the Black Movement has also come to recognize that literature in the classical English curriculum shows no significant concern for the life of his people. Consider further that this student knows (as everyone does know) that graduate seminars have been given over the years devoted entirely to quite minor and second or third rate figures in English and American literature and that the excuses for these courses have rested on their alleged historical importance. Then consider this black student's reaction when informed, probably by the chairman who approved or even gave these courses, that the poet

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Baraka does not deserve a seminar and neither does the novelist Richard Wright. Surely even those who, like myself, would not want to approve seminars devoted to Baraka or Wright must recognize that they have at least condoned if not created historical precedents in English Studies which make their opposition seem to a reasonable black like the most blatant racial and class bias.

It would be necessary to try to explain my own reluctance to approve of these proposed courses. Without any assurance of success I would try to demonstrate to a black student or, in a comparable case to a woman who felt her sex discriminated against in course offerings, that my opposition was based on the desire, long since expressed also with respect to white literature, to call a halt, finally, to a process which continually makes English Studies into a sham and which will inevitably make inquiries into minority or sexual aspects of literature poisonously trivial, debased, and quickly obsolete. But I would want to say, by way of positive suggestion, that in the brief time any student is enrolled in college—some 26 months, only a little over two years of course work in all—it is preposterous to start out with the assumption that life and literature are in any self-evident transaction with one another. Rather, the student should start learning, for the first two academic years, simply to read literature for the very peculiar, very special kind of history it is, and not for insights into a history to which it is supposed to refer. The effort should be to read literature so as to recognize the special nature of language as it occurs in different genres, and to see in genre not so much a criticism of life as a revelation of how life, how historical forces outside literature, have helped shape language into literary forms, forms which are if anything exclusive of life, forms which in their inception and history constitute a choice not only of what might be said but of what, at any given time, in any given situation, has to be left *un*said.

Only thereafter can larger questions be profitably asked, and then only tentatively. By that point any good student might have noticed that writers work on the assumption that the language they use and the forms they use do not really belong to them, that no one owns these things. Noticing this might make a student sad or angry. Or it might make him excited at the spectacle of writing as an activity, writing not as a finished thing so much as a constant struggle with a marvelously enticing and at the same time disciplinary kind of history

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as embodied literary forms. In any case, chances are that the experience will induce in the student the further recognition that perhaps the best way to study women in literature is to read a lot of books written by men—maybe George Eliot is more profitably read along with Wordsworth than along with Jane Austen—and that the best way to understand minorities in literature is by seeing in novels written by white as well as in novels written by black writers the degree to which literary form and language itself is perhaps by nature repressive. There can be no such thing, as I tried to show in *A World Elsewhere,* as a successfully imperial self in literature. Literature and the nature of language are so efficient in disposing of such selves, be they in Shakespeare or Melville or Faulkner, that it is scarcely the responsibility of literary criticism to warn against them. There is no need to worry about the subversive effect of American or of modern literature so long as the students have been taught to read it. Literature is even more tough on aberration than life is, even more systematic in dealing with liberation, be it the liberation of Faustian aspirants or of servants, women, blacks, Indians, and people like oneself. Only think of the impulses it represses, continually, in the interests of form. We pay a human price for a good book and the determination of this price seems to me an exciting and wondrous activity that must not be corrupted by political moralisms of any kind.

Literature is altogether less powerful in its effect than is generally believed. But that is the very reason why it is all the more revealing about the true destiny within cultural systems of the impulse toward freedom, of the subversive or minority imagination. Literature is greatest in its visionary modes precisely because the visionary mode is so fantastically difficult to reach, and above all difficult to sustain. Literature itself—by which I mean the Ideal of the term, not the candidates for fulfilling that Ideal—is itself a visionary possibility. It is a visionary possibility for those who write it, for those who read it, and, it must be remembered, for those who want to be elevated to it out of obscurity and obliviousness. That, to counteract the self-aggrandizement of literary-critical rhetoric, is simply a worthwhile way to feel. It helps keep literature, the Ideal of literature, the Ideal of reading as an intense experience, a charge upon the conscience of people who might otherwise put their energies to less sociable uses. But the function of literary *studies* has sociable uses of a quite different

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kind, not necessarily having to do at all with the promotion of an Ideal of literature. Let literature take care of itself, and let professors of English begin at last to take care of their classes, teaching them to spell, to punctuate, to annotate, to listen, look at and enact words and sentences, to spot repetitions and recurrences until these are at last recognized as types and genres of mind, and then to see these in turn as facts of history, equal to any other facts of history, historical experiences in themselves which do not need the sanction of other kinds of historical experience.

All of this will be labor, and labor is not kind to the self-importance which is peculiar to literary people. More than that it will require labor from students at a time when they seem unusually loath to exert themselves. Given the punitive demands for high enrollment as a justification for the offering of any course, especially in state supported institutions, courses in the humanities which call for a lot of reading, and especially a lot of writing, often are so under-subscribed as to be declared economically unfeasible. Departments in the humanities can therefore bring about a needed radical reformation of themselves—one that will eventually result in a re-location of responsibilities in the entire curriculum of the humanities and the social sciences—only if they are economically empowered to do so. The first and most pressing innovation is therefore financial support of a wholly original kind: not for expansion but for the retraction of the functions of already existing departments of literature.

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STORY

Susan Sontag

DOCTOR JEKYLL

Jekyll is thinking. Somewhere else, Gabriel Utterson is examining Jekyll's dossier, a thick, somewhat soiled tan folder with the doctor's surname followed by the initial H. neatly printed in purple ink on the flap. Jekyll lies on the sloping beach, under-used for a Saturday in May, searching his mouth with his tongue to expel some sand. His toddler is lurching along the water's edge, his wife has gone up to the station wagon to change from her wet bikini into a dry one. With his back pressed against the sorched sand, his belly flattened under the hot sun, Jekyll is thinking about the war, Utterson is perched on a high, old-fashioned architect's chair (one that doesn't swivel), thinking about Jekyll, and between these two points a line might be drawn, a physical link between them like, say, a long nylon thread. It might run from the gaudy cowboy belt that Utterson has put on today, to confound extra-pious disciples in town, straight to Jekyll's right ankle here in East Hampton. Utterson is wearing tinted bifocals. Were Jekyll to tug hard on his end, or just make a sudden violent movement, Utterson might be jolted out of his chair. If he falls, his spectacles might be broken.

Jekyll looks at his white toes, flexes them. Could messages using words be sent along this thread—in code, of course? Or is only violence transmissible? Jekyll's right ankle begins to itch. The sending of

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messages suggests a problem that Jekyll has been chewing over for months. Clearly Utterson has sources of information to which Jekyll is denied access. Jekyll's handsome leg begins to tremble: he'd like to get these messages, too. Is there a circuit to which he could plug in? A sand crab nips his toe. Jekyll jerks his right foot viciously.

Inside the cabin the Jekylls rent in Labrador for the whole of June, the good doctor, nerves strung tight by the long hours he puts in all year at the clinic, doesn't take advantage of his vacation to unwind. He is thinking about Utterson. The cabin is damp, cool. The bedsheets smell of camphor. Fir trees filter the crisp northern heat, and the mountains rising on all sides make the days short, too short; the sun doesn't surface until eight in the morning and has slid behind a snowy peak by five.

Outdoors, thoughts of Utterson spring less frequently to mind. Other risks become more attractive. Jekyll saunters through the woods, as carefree as he's ever likely to be, the astringent taste of liberty in his mouth. By three, breaking a half-hearted promise to his wife not to attempt anything dangerous in the way of mountaineering, he is almost to the top of a steep mountain. This climb would normally be no grand exploit for Jekyll, a competent Alpinist since his year as a post-graduate medical student in Vienna. What does make a mishap possible is that Jekyll is taking someone much less experienced up with him: Richard Enfield, his wife's cousin, who is sharing the cabin with them for the first week.

Jekyll advances nimbly, hand over hand, with Enfield following, dogged will-power firmly in control of his neglected suburban body. Glancing below, Jekyll spies Enfield absorbed in a duel with a boulder, slowed to a crawl. Jekyll stops instantly, to maintain the rope tying them together at the right degree of slackness. Sure that his cousin-in-law is not in serious trouble, Jekyll isn't going to embarrass Enfield by pointing out an easy way to clamber past the obstacle and turns away, splendidly vertical.

Jekyll inhales joyously. His torso is free as long as his left elbow stays braced in a crevasse in the rock face. His feet feel reassuringly heavy, sure, the soles of his climbing boots secured, almost welded to the narrow ledge on which he stands, waiting for Enfield to heave his

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other leg over the boulder and scramble up beside him. He checks the tautness of the rope that rises from his waist to the loop he's thrown to a cornice above, then yanks hard. The loop holds. He looks upward. The sun is still high. Dry-mouthed, contemptuous of his craving for a cigarette, Jekyll pulls more clean air into his long, robust body. He is not thinking of Utterson. He would be, though, if a substitution could be made, if Utterson were in Enfield's place, tied waist to waist to Jekyll, equally inept. For then Jekyll could imagine cutting the rope and letting Utterson fend for himself during this last, most strenuous part of the ascent. But he would be unlikely to go so far as to imagine Utterson panicking, losing his grip, scraping the air, shrieking like a flayed pig, hurtling from rock to rock down to the fjord below.

Tanned and fit, back from his Canadian holiday, Jekyll is loitering on an empty street below the World Trade Center. He's waiting for Hyde, who is supposed to bring his X-rays. Hyde is usually late, but not this late. Jekyll has skipped lunch to keep this date with Hyde, who, by insisting on meeting at the World Trade Center, which is out of everyone's way, and on a Sunday, shows that he hasn't lost his yen for the picturesque rendez-vous. Utterson, who drove into town this morning with a sample entourage and has not skipped one meal in the last thirty years, is mid-lunch at the Russian Tea Room. He is sucking on an unlit pipe, hungry-eyed, truculently waiting for his second order of borscht and pirojkis. It is possible that a line extends from the flattish back of Utterson's head to Jekyll's striped tie or to the laces of his new oxfords. But Jekyll doesn't consider this possibility. He's too preoccupied with Hyde.

The young man Jekyll expects to materialize any moment no longer makes it into town often; today, if he comes, it's as a special favor to his respectable, would-be alter ego. Also, if he comes, he won't look the way he is usually pictured. In the old days, the days of his citified wickedness, Hyde got the reputation of being big and hulking. But this is a fantasy concocted from 19th century middle-class nightmares about the immigrant urban poor, and diffused in our own century by Hollywood monster movies. The truth, which once perplexed Jekyll, is that Hyde is small, sickly, and, of course, younger than he is. "Naturally," Utterson has explained. "The evil part of your nature is less developed than the good part." Jekyll is not convinced

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by Utterson's allegorical view of their contrasting body-types. For one thing, he finds it too flattering to himself, too dismissive of Hyde. Jekyll has not been all that good. And hasn't Hyde been depraved enough? Jekyll suspects that Hyde's dwarfish stature and feeble stamina have a more banal, simply physical cause: a bad case of childhood rheumatic fever that was misdiagnosed by the school pediatrician and neglected by his ignorant parents. Hyde looks more underprivileged than monstrous. His fang-like teeth are not so much bestial as simply bad, despite extensive dental work done in his early twenties which Jekyll paid for; and he still suffers from bleeding gums. The quantity and distribution of Hyde's body hair have also been exaggerated. It's true that Hyde is hirsute and Jekyll is, for a Caucasian male, relatively hairless. However, while Jekyll has a well-barbered head of thick brown hair with no white hairs showing, that hasn't begun to recede at the forehead and temples, the younger man's greasy black shoulder-length hair is already starting to fall out. Utterson is bald, entirely bald. Jekyll is not wearing a hat, for if he were it would be blown away.

Jekyll steadies himself against the unseasonable July wind to keep from being pushed over to the tower wall. Perhaps a hurricane is blowing up prematurely from the Carribean. Just as he is about to give up and go home, he glimpses the puny figure of his old protegé, who still affects the black cape he stole years ago from an East Village boutique, stumping along at a good walk. Jekyll waves. Hyde hurries near, then nearer, then speeds right past him—as if he didn't see him at all. "Wait!" Jekyll shouts, grabbing for the billowing black cape. Hyde breaks into a lope, but Jekyll catches up with him at the far corner.

"I'm in a jam," Hyde whines. "I can't stop."

"I must talk to you," says Jekyll.

"Then come on up to my country place," Hyde barks hoarsely. He seems winded. "This dude is waiting for me now—"

"It's Utterson. Right?"

"Hell, no! Stop hassling me!" Hyde feints, eludes Jekyll's grasp, and lunges around the corner. Disappointed, Jekyll lets him escape. He crosses the street thoughtfully, enters a cafeteria, sits at a window table, and asks for an iced coffee. At the moment the waitress arrives with his order, he sees the bony figure in the cape veering round the

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block again, panting but still keeping up the same rapid pace. Jekyll lights a cigarette, then stubs it out (he's almost quit smoking), sips his coffee, and waits. The drink is two-thirds ice, most of which he removes with his fingers and drops in the ashtray. A few minutes later, Hyde rounds the corner again.

Jekyll is willing to suppose that Hyde will keep circling the block all afternoon, and feels like watching a while longer. But the waitress has come over and presented him with the check so he can vacate his table for other customers to use. Indignant, Jekyll points out that the cafeteria is almost deserted. She won't be budged. "One beverage is worth fifteen minutes," she recites. "It's a rule of the management. I don't make the rules around here."

"But you can break the rules," Jekyll says.

"How can I do that?" she answers.

Jekyll pauses, debating whether he should stick to his principles or order another undrinkable iced coffee. It is conceivable that, with the cord that might extend from the harness of a parachute that Jekyll could be wearing (in case he might be so foolish as to be tempted to leap from the top of the World Trade Center) to Utterson's left wrist, provided that at this exact moment Utterson is at the estate out at Oyster Bay (but he isn't; he is noisily drinking his third bowl of borscht and munching his eighth pirojki in midtown Manhattan), something could happen which would stop Hyde dead in his tracks. For if the rope were properly tied and Utterson were in the place he usually is, which would put him north-northwest of the cafeteria where Jekyll sits, then he, Jekyll, could trip Hyde as he rushes around the block the next time. But for this feat he would need Utterson's help, and Jekyll is never sure of how well-disposed toward him Utterson really is.

"What's happened to your confidence in me?" That's Utterson speaking. It is the first word he has directed to Jekyll since Jekyll took a seat at the long oval table in the pseudo-medieval refectory out at Oyster Bay. Utterson is entertaining a Mr. Carew, ambivalent admirer and prospective pupil, who, being a senior trade book editor at an important publishing house, is arranging for the paperback reissue of Utterson's long out-of-print, thousand page summum, *The Strange*

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Case of Cain and Abel; and Jekyll, along with three staff members and a handful of pupils in residence at the Institute, has been convened for lunch. Utterson is in his usual chair. Toward the end of the meal, he has been garrulously calculating the huge royalties the book is going to earn and lamenting his debts. Jekyll is in one of the straight-backed chairs lined up along the side of the table.

"My boy, I'm going to tell you something which, really, you are not eligible to know. Only those who are more developed, who have advanced further in the Work, know it." Two pupils still lingering at the table are staring avidly at Utterson, enviously at Jekyll. Without glancing at their side of the table, Utterson instructs one to wait for him in the Study House and the other to mow the front lawns, and doesn't continue until after they push back their chairs carefully, get up, and leave. "I receive messages from the future."

Even when frustrated by Utterson's habit of claiming anterior knowledge of everything that others tell him, Jekyll can't be as skeptical as he might like because Utterson has so often demonstrated cool inexplicable powers of clairvoyance. But he has never heard Utterson state his claim so impudently.

"Well?" says Utterson.

"I'm flattered. . . ."

"You think too much about the body, Henry," Utterson says impatiently. "That feels natural to a doctor but it's one-sided. You've never grasped a spiritual truth."

Jekyll bows his head at Utterson's reproach, while stubbornly continuing to think it unjust. This position gives him a mild cramp in his shoulder muscles, so he straightens up, "And the secret?" he says.

Utterson is sitting cross-legged on the raised platform in the center of the circular Study House, addressing some pupils, "Do what you will," he says, "and you'll find out how little you *can* will."

To English, which isn't his native language (as Utterson was not his name), he imparts a solemn and musical intonation. "Only a tiny part of your life is under your control," he declares. "As you are, you have no will."

He also says: "Try to know what you're feeling." He explains: "Observe yourself, yes. But as if you were a machine. You are nothing but your behavior."

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Changing the metaphor, he adds: "And your behavior, your words are all aped."

And later: "Introspection is bad. You have nothing to look into."

And still later: "Begin with the body. It's the only tool you have."

Meanwhile, having finished his afternoon stint at the clinic, Jekyll is down to sweat pants and shower clogs and is working out in a private gym on Lexington Avenue. From the other side of the room, the Nicaraguan coach compliments him on his skill with the punching bag. With each punch that he throws, Jekyll feels the blood circulating more happily in his body. He thinks of Hyde, who was rarely able to overwhelm his victims by sheer physical force, but usually had to use some nasty weapon; and even then, needed first to weaken them with the shock of his tense, misbegotten face, his stooped, undernourished figure, his outlandish, neo-diabolical garb. He had always expected Hyde to fill out, to become bigger, taller—if not simply with passing time, then as the result of the gymnastics ("movements," Utterson calls them) that Hyde did when he was briefly in residence at the Institute. Spiritual gymnastics is not enough, Jekyll concludes, hardly for the first time, throwing a last vicious right hook at the punching bag. Utterson, his broad face turning brick pink from an hour's non-stop talking in the Study House, ducks slightly to the left, rubs his shiny hard scalp, then sways with laughter. He, in his turn, concludes that he is getting careless. And that from now on he'd better give more thought to Jekyll.

As Hyde takes Jekyll for granted, the indifference of the ugly to the genteel, Jekyll envies Hyde, the envy of the almost middle-aged for the young. In spite of his confident responsive body and a driving schedule of work, Jekyll regards himself as low in vitality ("fifty watts," Utterson once jeered behind his back); no matter how exemplary a physician he becomes, he accuses himself of a chronic deficit of initiative. Hyde agrees. Utterson's Institute for Deprogramming Potential Human Beings attracts far too many people of this type.

Hyde, of course, so far as he could be counted as having passed through Utterson's hands, would be an exception. Despite his frail build and chronic colds, Hyde is someone who always finds his second wind. He has always been enterprising. When he first came to Jekyll's attention, referred to the clinic for a skin disease by a psychiatrist at

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the High School of Industrial Trades, Hyde already seemed grown-up, though he was only stealing cars then, and was just getting together his lucrative stable of thirteen-year-old boy and girl prostitutes. Growing up in an impoverished family (his father is a janitor) with many children, he had to learn early to fight for whatever he wanted. Jekyll comes from a prosperous home (his father still commutes every day from Darien to Wall Street) and has one sister, who is an eminent biochemist, and no brothers. Utterson, who long ago had changed his name to Gabriel Utterson from Gavril Uniades, claims to be a foundling. He denies indignantly that he could have had any sisters or brothers (other than his spiritual brethren in far away Tibet, where he studied Transcendental Medicine forty years ago) but is given to boasting on almost any occasion about the swarm of illegitimate children he's fathered in the State of New York and its environs. Jekyll assumes that Poole, the very young pupil trembling on the brink of puberty, who sleeps on a cot in the hall outside Utterson's door and acts as his valet, is actually one of these bastards.

Cleaning up after Utterson occupies most of Poole's day, which starts when, each morning, Utterson shouts for him to enter, and Poole does, to find the bed in violent wet disarray. There are acrid heavy stains on the other furniture and on the carpet. There is excrement on the walls of his dressing-room. As for the bathroom! Poole has visions of great, involuntary physiological epics enacted nightly in the dressing-room and bathroom. Or Utterson may be aiming consciously to destroy these rooms—perhaps to test the development of Poole's will, his "true will," as Utterson would put it, as the boy labors in his service. But either way, there would be no point in beginning the actual cleaning until Utterson has finished his breakfast, which is always taken in bed. For merely drinking coffee can produce a holocaust: coffee spattered all over the room as well as in the bed. When, as he sometimes does, Utterson takes his late afternoon coffee in his room, in the presence of members of his staff and a few pupils, the bed must be re-made with fresh sheets a second time that day. Though he is often questioned by the irreverent and the curious, Poole, conscious of the great honor of serving Utterson, refuses to describe the exact state of Utterson's quarters. And it is doubtful whether the details would give much precision to the persistent rumors that much more goes on there than the consumption of coffee

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and the final denouement of Utterson's digestive dramas. All that Poole could truthfully testify to—from the evidence of each morning's disorder, its variety, its thickness—is that almost any human activity could have taken place there the night before.

Utterson is being served eggs, steak, and coffee on a tray. Someone is lying next to Utterson, buried under the mountain of blankets and befouled sheets, but Poole can't make out who it is. Well-trained, he is not guessing. The boy goes into the dressing-room and surveys the walls to see if he'll need a step-ladder this morning to clean them off. Meanwhile, Jekyll gets out of bed delicately so as not to wake his wife, tiptoes across their bedroom, and goes through the apartment to the kitchen to start making breakfast. He is not walking barefoot for fear of disturbing Utterson in Oyster Bay, who's already awake anyway, gulping his coffee directly from the battered old thermos bottle, but because he, Jekyll, revels in the feel of the deep pile carpet under his feet.

Sweating, white-lipped, Jekyll is jogging in Central Park. It's just twilight. As in some city in a nightmare, a thin clay-colored pall lowers over the trees, but the wind is continually slicing into and redistributing the smog, so that Jekyll runs metronomically through many degrees and hues of twilight, some black, some dark green, some reddish-brown, all back lit by the cubes of electric brightness multiplying minute by minute in the stolid ramparts along Fifth Avenue. Jekyll continues, parallelling the Reservoir. The gravel sounds under his sneakers, and it would be foolish to think that someone is following him; other people jog in the park, too. Jekyll has never succumbed to the paranoia epidemic in New York for decades. It's in the park that Hyde used to lurk, preying on strollers, crazies, baby nurses, and joggers. But Jekyll will stroll or jog here at any hour. He is not afraid. Ultimately, Jekyll has learned, one is only afraid of oneself. He has mastered the terror of Hyde, he has mastered himself. In Jekyll's schedule, as in the normal schedule of any alert city dwellers, there are always slots for danger. Jekyll keeps jogging. Then the Voice speaks to him.

Is this a voice in my mind, Jekyll asks himself.

Once there were other voices which came and accused him, but Jekyll had decided—after a complex procedure in which he demanded that each voice accredit itself—that all these voices were in-

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terior voices. He dismissed them. They went. Now, with this one, he is not so sure.

Jekyll slows down. He has glimpsed a pair of feet in high heels sticking out between two bushes. Run! No, stop. He retraces his steps, grim-mouthed, his pulse leaping. Face down behind the bushes, moaning, is a black woman in a tight red skirt and pink satin blouse. Jekyll kneels next to the open purse lying at her side, and turns her over. She looks about forty-five, consumes mostly carbohydrates, shows the usual signs of hyperthyroidism and high blood pressure, and is bleeding from a ragged cut on her face and a deep slash on her left arm. Jekyll stands and steps back onto the path, looking about to see if there is anyone to assist him. The woman moans. The twilight advances, languidly proceeding into darkness. Nobody is in sight.

Bending from the waist, Jekyll finds the woman too heavy to lift. He has to stoop in order to gather her, clumsily, in his arms. Since just recently he could easily lift patients as heavy as she is, Jekyll wonders if he is getting out of condition. Still, he is managing better than Utterson would be, if Utterson were here, stooping beside a bush, trying to pick up a heavy body. He wouldn't find it so easy. Utterson looks strong, but that's mainly because he's fat. And the carbuncle embedded in his right side must pain him sometimes. Should Utterson, because he likes to show off, be trying right now to lift one of his docile pupils above his head, he'll probably keel over—Jekyll thinks, with tense pleasure. Jekyll slowly makes his way out of the park with his inert burden, looking for a squad car or a taxi.

Jekyll is sitting to one side of the twelve-foot high fireplace (under the bogus heraldic arms) of the great hall—the main building of the Oyster Bay estate being a Languedoc castle built in the 1920's by a Long Island faucet millionaire, and the rent for the whole property being a sum paid annually by one of Utterson's most generous admirers, a Texas oil magnate's widow now living in Bermuda. Utterson, in dinner clothes and a boiled shirt, his haunches filling the big upholstered chair opposite Jekyll, is toying with a water pistol. In the far shadows of the room, under an Art Deco stained glass window depicting the Grail saga in ten panes, a pupil is taking notes. Jekyll has come out to see Utterson to complain about being spied on. He's sure that his phone is tapped and his mail is being opened.

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Utterson, who never expresses astonishment at anything others tell him, and rarely disagrees, smiles ironically this time. "Perhaps you've done something to get you in trouble with the civil authorities. Your views on the war, for instance. Or some irregularity in your practice, like prescribing illegal drugs, or not doing enough to prolong the life of a patient with terminal cancer, or—"

"No." Jekyll shakes his head. "Nothing like that. I'm sure it's being done by people from the Institute."

"Wouldn't I know about it, if that were so?"

"Would you?" asks Jekyll.

"If I can see into the future"—glancing at the pupil in the corner bent over his clipboard, Utterson winks at Jekyll—"you might assume that I can see into the present, too."

"And you don't see any danger, anyone shadowing me, keeping track of my movements, trying to scare me into giving up what I'd like to do?"

Utterson lets fly one of his celebrated scornful looks in Jekyll's direction. "What about your friend Hyde? I've told you he's dangerous company for you. Let me handle him. You can't."

"Nonsense," says Jekyll. "I never see Hyde any more. And besides, you know what he's become now. Why, he just . . ." he pauses, "just goes round and round in circles," he concludes with a grin.

"Don't grin like an idiot. You didn't say anything funny."

"I did," says Jekyll.

"I, I, I" Utterson roars. "Do you hear yourself?" He aims the water pistol at Jekyll. "Who has the right to say 'I'?" He slams it to the floor. "Not you! Do you hear? That's a right that has to be earned!"

Jekyll stares back at him defiantly. "And Ed Hyde?" he says. "Can Hyde say 'I'?"

"Why not?" Utterson replies. "As long as he keeps—as you say—going around in circles. You understand now?"

Jekyll doesn't understand. Something better than that is happening. Utterson has put an idea in Jekyll's head. But since it's not an idea he intended to put there, it doesn't make his large bald head any lighter; it only makes Jekyll's head heavier. If Jekyll bounded out of his chair, flung himself onto the upholstered chair opposite him with the man in it, and knocked his heavy head against Utterson's—but he must do it right now, when the balance of physical forces has tilted

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ever so slightly in his, Jekyll's, favor—it is conceivable that Utterson's head might crack open, all his ideas spill out, and then Jekyll and not Utterson would possess the secrets of the harmonious development of humankind. But Jekyll is not sure he wants the responsibility of having all that wisdom in his keeping. Look at the repulsively contradictory, heathen creature it's made out of Utterson: someone both taciturn and voluble, mercenary and ascetic, glib and wise, plebian and princely, obscene and pure, indolent and energetic, cunning and naive, snobbish and democratic, unfeeling and compassionate, impractical and shrewd, irritable and patient, capricious and reliable, sickly and sturdy, young and old, empty and full, heavy as cement and light as helium.

Utterson once said, "I am a human being without quotation marks." Jekyll holds no such exalted view of himself. It's enough that Jekyll has pilfered his new idea about Hyde; and, in back of that, in case the first idea fails, another idea. About Hyde.

Jekyll is visiting his sister, who works at Rockefeller University, with his first idea. It's to ask if she and her colleagues can devote some of their spare time to developing a formula (to be ingested in a pill, capsule, injection, suppository, or syrup) that would sack the very fortress of identity. What he has in mind is a formula that would enable him occasionally to become his young friend Hyde. Become Hyde physically, he means. For Jekyll is willing—from time to time, when he thinks it might be useful or stimulating, or simply when he senses that he's languishing in a rut—actually to inhabit Hyde's runty, light body. The prize is the increment in energy: the different species of energy from his own which Hyde possesses. And he is willing, in the friendliest, most brotherly spirit imaginable, provided that the length of the exchange be settled in advance, to let Hyde have a loan of his own intelligent, solid body. Nothing less than a real exchange would be fair, though Jekyll doesn't intend to let Hyde put his hairy hands, with nicotine-stained fingers and nails chewed down to their moons, upon his own beloved wife.

Understandably, it is the scoundrel of some years ago whom he wishes to become, Hyde of the prodigious crimes, Hyde before he was rehabilitated or lost his nerve, Hyde before he was tamed by Utterson,

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Hyde before he moved to a rural slum upstate. Certainly Hyde before he fell in love, with a redheaded ex-Go-go dancer recently turned respectable who had become a stewardess on Mohawk Airlines and who, two years later, fatigued by Hyde's amorous abuses, left him for a Volvo dealer in Great Neck. Jekyll supposes that Hyde's unexpected fall into love—invulnerable, lascivious, jaded, heartless Hyde, in love!—was what finally broke his spirit. And not the ministrations of Utterson, as is so often claimed. Jekyll longs to see again the old Hyde, careering through the dark dock-side streets of the West Side on his Harley-Davidson, grinding his teeth, gunning his motor, an Andean-Indian woman's bowler on his small head, his ridiculous black cape blowing behind him in the wind, bearing against his slight back the weight of some leather-jacketed apprentice hoodlum with three switchblades who hugs him around the waist, running down old ladies, delivering dope, tossing Molotov cocktails through the windows of anti-war organizations.

Jekyll is explaining how much preliminary work on the potion he's done in his own laboratory, why he is unable to push his research to a conclusion, and exactly how his sister, who has the newest and best technology for genetic code-breaking at her disposal, can help. His sister, wearing a white smock, her firm back (like Jekyll's) aligned with the metal doorframe of her shiny laboratory, is turning him down cordially. With the new Defense Dept. grant, the team is too busy now. She looks terribly pretty, reminding Jekyll that good looks run in their family. He lingers a moment longer, more chagrined by the nature of his request than by her refusal, hoping to cover it up with a joke. "Prof. Guest. My brother Dr. Jekyll," she murmurs as one of her assistants squeezes past them through the doorway they're blocking, bearing a rack of test-tubes filled with reddish, dark purple, and watery green liquids. While shaking Guest's free hand, Jekyll remembers that he has promised to drop by to see Lanyon and give him a quick examination and a shot before checking back at the clinic. In Lanyon's midtown office thirty minutes later, bending over the elderly lawyer with his stethoscope, he imagines it is Utterson's heart which he hears thumping.

Somewhere else, a suburb of London, a once famous opera singer is explaining Utterson to a skeptical friend. "Though he could

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make one frantic, furious, miserable, whenever there was a real contact everything seemed justified."

"But he's a pig! My God, when I think of that appalling story you told me about his asking you to—"

"Yes, yes," the ex-pupil interrupts. "I know it's hard to understand. . . ." She sighs. "How can I explain? From the beginning . . . the first time I ever saw Mr. Utterson, I sensed a deep bond with him, a bond that grew stronger with the years. It was never a hypnotic tie, believe me. Mr. Utterson's teaching helps one be free of suggestion. This inner tie (I suppose you could call it a magnetic tie), this invisible bond with him, made Mr. Utterson the person *nearest* to one, in the true sense of the word. That proximity was . . . painful, much of the time. Once in a while one got to see the 'real' Mr. Utterson, with whom one wished to stay forever. This was not the 'everyday' Mr. Utterson, who sometimes was gentle and sometimes very disagreeable, and whom you often wished to run away from.

"A clown," her friend interjects. "A drunk. A sadist. A charla—"

"But even then," continues the ex-pupil, "one stayed with him, because one's Work depended on it."

"But finally you left," says the friend.

"Mr. Utterson made me leave. He said I had enough energy now, and that I wasn't likely to have any more."

"You miss him."

"Of course," says the ex-pupil fiercely. "But I never want to see him again as long as I live."

Meanwhile, on another day, Utterson is sitting in the great hall of the Oyster Bay estate, giving fifteen minutes to Ron Newcomen, an ex-Weatherman who has recently surfaced from underground and has hitchhiked with all his possessions on his back from the Coast to the Institute in the hope of being admitted as a pupil. Utterson is

(Continued on page 586)

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Stephen Spender

A PARALLEL WORLD

For someone who has not shared the experiences described, to write about this book[1] is an impertinence. Solzhenitsyn indicates that it was only possible to write it through having himself been a prisoner. Even so it "could never have been created by one person alone. In addition to what I myself was able to take away from the Archipelago—on the skin of my back, and with my eyes and ears—material for this book was given me by reports, memoirs, and letters by 227 witnesses. . . ."

It is a book about a parallel world of murder, torture, slavery, labor camps, imprisonment under the most terrible conditions. The Gulag Archipelago is the Prison Industry inaugurated by the Bolsheviks under Lenin, carried to unprecedented degrees of horror imposed with ruthless cynicism by Stalin, and still continuing to this day.

As a writer of my generation there was a sense in which I always knew that this terrible reality which embodies fundamental truth about contemporary history was happening throughout my lifetime. This parallel world has been there, just beyond a wall on our side of which there have been the freedom and the pleasures providing the conditions out of which we have produced our work. Yet there has always been the feeling that because the concentration camps of Stalin and Hitler existed, those inside them were enduring the real truth about the history of our time and that their reality trivialized ours. Given this reality of a parallel world of nightmare what right did any poet or novelist have to write about the personal unhappiness of people living comfortable lives? Rather, he should be writing about the happiness of characters supposing themselves to be unhappy when they were not in cells designed to hold five people but actually holding fifteen, or condemned to be interrogated for days on end during which they were not

1. *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation I-II.* By Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn. Harper and Row. $12.50.

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allowed to sleep, or being submitted to tortures perfected by the techniques of an age of progress. Solzhenitsyn writes:

> If the intellectuals in the plays of Chekhov who spent all their time guessing what would happen in twenty, thirty, or forty years had been told that in forty years interrogation by torture would be practiced in Russia; that prisoners would have their skulls squeezed within iron rings; that a human being would be lowered into an acid bath; that they would be trussed up naked to be bitten by ants and bedbugs; that a ramrod heated over a primus stove would be thrust up their anal canal (the "secret brand"); that a man's genitals would be slowly crushed beneath the toe of a jackboot; and that, in the luckiest possible circumstances, prisoners would be tortured by being kept from sleeping for a week, by thirst, and by being beaten to a bloody pulp, not one of Chekhov's plays would have gotten to its end because all the heroes would have gone off to insane asylums.

* * *

In England during the twenties and thirties it became fashionable to write about History. By this was meant the historic process conditioning people's lives so that their values, sensibilities etc., were only symptoms of the time in which they lived:

Think now
History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
Guides us by vanities,

Eliot wrote. And Auden

History to the defeated
May say Alas, but cannot help or pardon.

(Towards the end of his life, Auden scrawled across Cyril Connolly's copy of *Spain,* in which this passage occurs: "This is a lie!")

But supposing that History is not an abstraction capable of being personified by poets who attribute to it something of the sickness of their lives: supposing it is the price paid in the sweat and blood and tears of people who are victims of the rulers who have power? In this case the reality is not the personified abstract History in the works of modern poets but—where the shoe pinches. It is—to use George Orwell's *1984* metaphor—the face that is perpetually smashed in by the jackboot. To live history is to be that smashed-in face. During the Industrial Revolution in England History was the workers in

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the factories of the barrack-like new industrial towns in the ruined and blackended countryside. The work of those writers who ignored this seems to fester like those lilies in Shakespeare's sonnet "that smell far worse than weeds." Most of Tennyson is festering lilies. The Victorian novelists, Dickens and George Eliot, are in some sense more *poetic* than any of the Victorian poets (witness the opening chapters of *Bleak House),* because they enclose more of the underlying reality and make literature of it.

At the same time when, as has happened in the twentieth century, the gap between the underlying reality gets too wide, artists are faced by a terrible dilemma. To immerse themselves in the reality is almost certainly to be destroyed by it, because it is almost totally destructive. The underlying reality of the first half of the twentieth century has been war and prison camps. But very few of those writers who have been immersed in these have been able to make literature out of them. And, though some literature has come out of the war experience, almost none has come out of the concentration camps. The consciousness that might have been transformed was extinguished by the overwhelmingly stifling atmosphere.

For this reason what the twentieth century has mostly provided is literature written by those who are uninvolved in the underlying reality but who are in the sensibility reflected in their work *conscious* of it. Consciousness means being aware of the underlying reality without actually experiencing it and being extinguished by it. The poets have become the supreme upholders of consciousness. Sometimes their consciousness of other people's suffering can become converted into overwhelming private suffering of their own: hence American "confessional" poetry. In fiction we have a kind of novelist who moves between two worlds: that of the underlying reality, which he may actually visit from time to time, like Graham Greene visiting Cuba, Africa and the Far East, and that of our privileged freedom, which enables him to write about it. Ernest Hemingway was an outstanding example of this kind of writer. Norman Mailer is a more recent example.

Solzhenitsyn subtitles *The Gulag Archipelago* "An Experiment in Literary Investigation." He has gone down into this Inferno of the underlying reality and redeemed it as documentation, reminiscence and ideas for fiction (sometimes he makes a footnote of some anecdote and remarks that it is material for a story he has in mind, or which someone else might use.) In his preface he makes the kind of claim which Dante, returning from the depths of the human universe might have made, if—as has happened in the Twentieth century—the Inferno were of this world, this life, real, over there, the other side of the wall:

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> I have absorbed into myself my own eleven years there as not something shameful nor as a nightmare to be cursed: I have come almost to love that monstrous world, and now, by a happy turn of events, I have also been entrusted with many recent reports and letters. So perhaps I shall be able to give some account of the bones and flesh of that salamander—which incidentally, is still alive.

By being arrested in February 1945 when he was an officer on the Baltic front fighting the Germans, Solzhenitsyn gained entrance to this inferno. The cause of his arrest was his correspondence with a friend, in which they had exchanged comments critical of the regime. He was taken by three Soviet counter-intelligence officers who handed over to him a map, by which he was able to guide them to their headquarters. When they got to headquarters he was introduced to this underworld by being put in a "temporary punishment cell":

> It was the length of one human body and wide enough for three to lie packed tightly, four in a pinch. As it happened, I was the fourth, shoved in after midnight. The three lying there blinked sleepily at me in the light of the smoky kerosene lantern and moved over, giving me enough space to lie on my side, half between them, half on top of them, until gradually, by sheer weight, I could edge my way in.

In a matter of fact way, Solzhenitsyn relates what happens to him, as a thread providing sequence that runs through the book. He never shows the slightest trace of self-pity. He is there as a witness. What he shows is mostly the humanity of his fellow prisoners (who could sometimes of course be inhuman also, as in the terrible description of the thieves in the railway cars on the journey to the ports of the Archipelago). He is chiefly concerned however in describing why, and how, this happened, and happened to so many millions.

He traces the terroristic punitive system back to the very beginnings of the Revolution, remarking ironically "that even before there was any Civil War it could be seen that Russia, due to the makeup of its population, was obviously not suited for any socialism whatsoever." There are various senses in which this might be true; but what Solzhenitsyn means is that Lenin and his associates never trusted the Russian people.

There is, I think, something about the communist ideology which produces total distrust of anyone except the group of leaders who are in power. This ideology presupposes that the true communists of the central committee are totally right in all their decisions. They are much more infallible than the Pope, because beyond the Pope there is God who might consider the Pope wrong. But a communist leader, or group of leaders in power, are not subject

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to criticism by any authority, for there are no communists more powerful than themselves. Absolute ideological correctness is fused with absolute power in a system which has all the claims of being absolutely objective in its attitudes and absolutely scientific in carrying out its policy. Power, even more than the ideology, gives the communist state this authority. Power ultimately becomes ideology and authority. Since communism is embodied in the leaders, whoever criticizes them is defining himself as to that extent anti-communist, and of course, the extent to which he is critical is only the tip of the iceberg of his profound anti-communism, perhaps unknown even to himself. Some perhaps slight criticism he makes openly or thinks secretly to himself is a surface symptom of a deeper, perhaps all-possessing hostility, just as a nervous tic is a symptom of some deep neurosis.

To complete the picture of absolute ideological correctness and absolute power one must add that of absolute interest. In a world divided into hundreds of different kinds of interest, or self-interest, the Russian communist leaders theoretically represented the absolute interest of the working class vested in them.

As someone outside Russia who lived through much of the period described by Solzhenitsyn, the only crumb of testimony I can add to his is confirmation of the seeming infallibility of Stalin to communist sympathizers. This was the inevitable result of his being the all-powerful leader of the only country in the world in which communism was in power. Since he was in this unique position, to criticize his pronouncements was not just to criticize his Communism by the standards of some other communism, it was to take the side of the bourgeoisie against the one communist leader of the one communist state. The very fact that the bourgeois press told stories (some of which happened to be true) throwing doubt on the perfect justice of the Soviet trials made these stories not believed by those who sympathized with Russia. The bourgeois press which represented the interest of capitalism had every reason to invent them. And if a fellow traveller found himself believing anti-Soviet statements in the bourgeois press, then his doing so made him suspect that he, as a bourgeois at heart, wished to believe them.

Solzhenitsyn summarizes in a phrase the attitude of Bukharin and the other Russian leaders who were tried in 1937, those who above all wished to be communists, but whom Stalin "before they became an opposition . . . declared them to be one, and by this move rendered them powerless." "Bukharin," he writes "(like all the rest of them) did not have his own *individual point of view*":

> And all their efforts were directed towards staying in the Party. And toward not harming the Party at the same time.

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This is, of course, the heart of the matter. The word "individual" is in itself very revealing. They did not have and moreover, they would have considered it ideologically wrong to have, an individual point of view. Was not individualism always coupled with the epithet "Bourgeois"—did not one say "bourgeois individualism?" They did not have a point of view which was outside the communist one, because they had made that the center of their universe.

To say that communism is a religion strikes me in some ways as odious and vulgar. But if you say that it is a religious anti-religion, that is to say, a religion of man instead of God, with a human ideology made an absolute, and, with a Pope who,—because there is no God—represents that section of humanity—the proletariat—whose existence and interests are considered absolute—then the identity of these opposites works very well.

The thought that the representative of the humanity-proletariat who —because there is no God—replaces God might be Satan is unthinkable. Or even if it does occur in certain minds as a faint questioning doubt, it has to be dismissed. And when one thinks of the Russian Revolution, the scandal of its being revealed at such an early stage of its history would be too appalling: appalling in itself, and appalling too because it would mean the triumph of the forces of evil, the capitalists. It would mean that for the first time in history the communist anti-god God had appeared and proved to be the devil.

It is impossible to read the *Gulag Archipelago* without feeling that from the communist point of view one is reading a description of a secular Hell. The fundamental sin, which includes all other sins, of those who are in the Inferno is pride. They have acted from their "individual point of view" and set themselves apart from the will which is the center of their universe, and in obeying which they could alone find their peace. Their attitudes—or those of which they are suspected—are defined as crimes against the state. But often the crime—if it exists at all—is a thought, a memory, an inherited disposition or characteristic which in hypothetical circumstances might lead to crime. Members of religious groups, of separate nationalities, of old pre-Revolutionary families harbor wishes in their hearts which might lead to anti-Soviet activities; and that is enough to jail them for ten years or more.

They have not loved Stalin. One of Solzhenitsyn's best anecdotes is of the director of the paper factory who failed to show sufficient enthusiasm for Stalin at a meeting in Moscow Province:

> At the conclusion of the conference, a tribute to Comrade Stalin was called for. Of course, everyone stood up (just as everyone had leaped to his feet during the conference at mention of his name). The small hall echoed with "stormy applause, rising to an ovation." For three minutes, four minutes, five minutes, the "stormy applause, rising to an ovation," continued.

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The applause continued for eleven minutes, because no one wanted to be seen by the NKVD men posted in the hall, as ceasing to applaud. "Then after eleven minutes, the director of the paper factory assumed a businesslike expression and sat down in his seat. And, oh, a miracle took place! Where had the universal, uninhibited, indescribable enthusiasm gone? To a man, everyone else stopped dead and sat down. They had been saved! The squirrel had been smart enough to jump off his revolving wheel. . . . That same night the factory director was arrested. They easily pasted ten years on him on the pretext of something quite different. But after he had signed Form 206, the final document of the interrogation, his interpreter reminded him: 'Don't every be the first to stop applauding!' "

What I have written above about communism as a religious anti-religion in which the dictator takes the place of both a Pope (who represents God who is the proletariat) and also is God (since the proletariat have no voice in all this) applies of course only to those to whom the Party is a religious anti-religious Church. It doesn't apply to the masses of people who were Russians before they were communists, or members of some other nationality before they were Russians, or kulaks, or peasants, or engineers, or Cadets, or old-style intellectuals. Millions of them were arrested for the reason that they could be easily cast in the role of class enemies and thus blamed for the mistakes of the communists or for their failure to carry out totally unrealizable programmes. The classic example of members of the community who could be regarded as potentially hostile outsiders and so blamed for all mistakes in their very important work was those necessary technicians of the revolution, the engineers. Solzhenitsyn explains that they were always regarded with suspicion.

> . . . We never did trust the engineers—and from the very first years of the Revolution we saw to it that those lackeys and servants of former capitalist bosses were kept in line by healthy suspicion and surveillance by the workers . . . However during the reconstruction period, we did permit them to work in our industries, while the whole force of the class assault was turned against the intelligentsia. . . . But the more our economic leadership matured . . . the more the number of plans increased and the more those plans overlapped and conflicted with one another, the clearer became the engineers' basic commitment to wrecking, their insincerity, slyness, venality. The Sentinel of the Revolution narrowed its eyes with even greater vigilance—and wherever it directed its narrow gaze it immediately discovered a nest of wreckers.

However although engineers when submitted to interrogation, sleeplessness and torture, could be made to confess, in their confessions they only took the blame for their inability to fulfill impossible goals set by planners. This

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was not the same as the old party members' confessions of sin in their hearts against the ideology and the Party and its leader.

Solzhenitsyn cites Koestler as one of the few analysts who understood the reasons for which the Old Guard communists who were victims of the purges in 1937 made their confessions. He points out though that the legend that the old Bolsheviks were extraordinarily tough and had proved themselves unbreakable in Tsarist times is exaggerated. In fact "they had never in all their lives experienced a *genuinely merciless interrogation* (because such a thing did not exist at all in Tsarist Russia)." They had never undergone periods of imprisonment as long and as cruel as those in Soviet Russia. As colleagues of Stalin they were in the position of dealing with an "Oriental despot" of great cruelty and cunning who was a genius at understanding and working on the weaknesses of those whom he wished to destroy. Solzhenitsyn's study of Stalin's long-drawn-out monstrously cruel treatment of Bukharin illustrates this.

The attitude of many of Stalin's colleagues to him was the familiar one of weaker people flattered by their proximity to ruthless power. They believe that the powerful one will betray others but never them themselves. The great man's loveable personality intervenes in their favor and at the expense of everyone else. Even Yagoda the organizer of the show trials who had sent millions of people to death in fulfillment of Stalin's wishes, could not believe that Stalin would destroy *him.*

> This murderer of millions simply could not imagine that his superior Murderer, up top, would not, at the last moment, stand up for him and protect him. Just as though Stalin had been sitting right there in the hall, Yagoda confidently and insistently begged him directly for mercy: "I appeal to you! *For you* I built two great canals!"

Part of the legend of the trials is that all those indicted could be produced in court and made to reel off their abject confessions. But Solzhenitsyn points out that there were some who committed suicide when they realized that they were to be arrested (Skrypnik, Tomsky, Gamarnik). And that "for some reason" others "whose names would have embellished the trials" were not produced at them. "They put on trial the most compliant. A selection was made after all."

On the whole the trials were "troublesome and expensive. And Stalin decided not to use open trials any longer." After a few attempts, he abandoned a scheme for local trials since "he couldn't find producers who were good enough." Solzhenitsyn gives one example of such a local trial, at the village of Kady. This account is one of the most humanly encouraging in the book, which with all its horror and darkness is a tribute to the endurance and

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courage of most of the victims. The purpose of this trial was to engineer the destruction of one Fyodor Ivanovich Smirnov, the First Secretary of the District Party Committee, and Stavrov, a literate and conscientious peasant who was head of the District Agricultural Department. When Smirnov was away on holiday, his deputy the second Secretary, a man called Romanov, arranged to have a resolution passed by the District Party Committee, censoring Stavrov. However another leader, Vasily Grigoryevich Vlasov, got up at the Party meeting and proposed that Romanov be expelled from it for slandering Stavrov. The District NKVD intervened and arrested Stavrov, who, having confesssed to everything, died under torture. There followed a trial staged in the village and conducted under the light of kerosene lamps in which Stavrov's written testimony, given before he died, was read as evidence. The other defendants, who had also confessed under interrogation, were questioned and "*All* of them *repudiated* the testimony they had given during the interrogation." The trial continued, with the prosecution failing to break the spirit of the defendants. Vlasov stated: "I consider you not a court but actors pretending to be a court in a stage farce where roles have already been written for you. You are engaged in a repulsive provocation on the part of the NKVD. You are going to sentence me to be shot no matter what I say. I believe one thing only: the time will come when you are here in my place."

At various points in his book Solzhenitsyn raises the question of why more people did not resist arrest. How could individuals let themselves be spirited away in a crowded street by plain clothes police, without raising a cry of protest or appealing to passersby? Why did people who had been warned that they were in danger, not leave their homes and go to another city? He cites examples of exceptional cases of those who did act courageously and who escaped or who were even let go by rebuffed interrogators. He is convinced that these appalling waves of murders and imprisonment could not have happened if enough people had protested, made their indignation known.

He never quotes George Orwell, but some of his conclusions seem rather Orwellian. One is that the peculiar insidiousness of ideological arguments used by people in power, can only be resisted by common sense, by insisting that two and two make four. He gives an example from the dialectics of the public prosecutor Andrei Yanuaryevich Vyshinsky of the ideological argufying which can terrify a Bukharin but which could scarcely affect someone who insists that two plus two make four:

> Vyshinsky, availing himself of the most flexible dialectics . . . pointed out in a report . . . that it is never possible for mortal men to establish absolute truth, but relative truth only. He then proceeded to a further step, which jurists of the last two thousand years had not been willing to take: that the truth established by interrogation and trial could not be absolute, but only, so to speak, relative. Therefore, when we sign a sen-

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> tence ordering someone to be shot we can never be *absolutely* certain, but only approximately, in view of certain hypotheses, and in a certain sense, that we are punishing a *guilty person*. . . . The proofs of guilt were relative, approximate, and the interrogator could find them, even when there was no evidence and no witness, without leaving his office, "basing his conclusions not only on his intellect but also on his Party sensitivity, his moral *forces*" (in other words, the superiority of someone who has slept well, has been well fed, and has not been beaten up) "and on his *character*" (i.e. his willingness to apply cruelty!).

From what I have written above it will be seen that in the absence of "absolute truth" there *is* an absolute: the decision made, or the history written, by the Party when there is the complete fusion of ideology with power and when this is embodied in one committee, or, better, in one person: Stalin.

If literature means bringing the material of truth about life that has been suppressed into the light of consciousness and creating it in forms which reveal it as named things which can be dealt with, then this book is great literature. We should not be put off by the fact that the material which Solzhenitsyn has, for the most part, created as anecdote, happens to be millions of people's lives, and that it is not the suppressed material of the Freudian unconscious. A life can be just as much repressed as a hidden wish: and is not a murdered life, reduced to non-being by the police state, a suppressed wish? It is difficult to think that this gigantic transformation of ghosts into palpable and living stories and evidence will not have some effect in Russia, and is not a blow against threatening tyrannies elsewhere on behalf of us all.

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Barbara Rose

TWILIGHT OF THE SUPERSTARS

> There isn't anything that doesn't go now. The artist community is completely dissolved and artists aren't even talking to each other. They're all geared to the public, at least intellectually. The Pop artists exploded the thing . . . Pollock wanted to become a celebrity and he did. He got kicked out of the 21 Club many times and de Kooning is living like Elizabeth Taylor. Everybody wants to know who he's sleeping with, about the house he's building and everything. He has no private life. But finally it was Andy Warhol. He has become the most famous. He's a household word. He ran together all the desires of artists to become celebrities, to make money, to have a good time, all the Surrealist ideas. Andy Warhol has made it easy.
>
> —Ad Reinhardt, unpublished monologue

> In the future, everyone will be famous for fifteen minutes.
>
> —Andy Warhol

Eight Contemporary Artists[1] is an exhibition of new works by three American, four European and one Australian conceptualists, whose common premise appears to be that art should provide minimal visual stimulation, a lack presumably compensated for by the professed profundity of its cerebral content. Normally one would easily overlook such a show, which is as bland and tepid as its deliberately non-committal title; however, *Eight Contemporary Artists* is significant because it is the most extensive exhibition of contemporary art held by the Museum of Modern Art since 1970. And as the widely acknowledged arbiter of current taste, the Museum of Modern Art continues to serve as a telling barometer of prevailing standards and attitudes. That a show of this nature should take place within its exclusive precincts represents the degree to which the MOMA has modified its relatively conservative position. Until now,

1. *Eight Contemporary Artists,* an exhibition of work by Vito Acconci, Alighiero Boetti, Daniel Buren, Hanne Darboven, Jan Dibbets, Robert Hunter, Brice Marden, Dorothea Rockburne, at the Museum of Modern Art, October 9, 1974-January 5, 1975.

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the Museum has not acknowledged the feverish flowering and fading of seasonal styles by singling out any particular group of presently modish artists from the many contending stances and styles that have splintered the art community into so many antagonistic factions (e.g. Photo-Realists, neo-realists, minimalists, land artists, pop artists, media environmentalists, and abstract painters and sculptors, themselves individually polarized toward varying degrees of literalism, lyricism, hard, soft and no edges).

Other than a general lack of interest in what Marcel Duchamp ironically categorized as "retinal art"—meaning that which appeals to the eye—the eight artists selected by curator Jennifer Licht share two other rather telling characteristics: short careers and long bibliographies. The successor to a series of exhibitions sporadically organized by retired MOMA curator Dorothy Miller featuring heterogeneous groups of American artists, *Eight Contemporary Artists* differs from Miss Miller's *Americans* in that it seems less the expression of an idiosyncratic and fallible personal taste than a carefully computed scorecard, a kind of All Star team based on Gallup Poll ratings taken from the current art press. For example, there is an uncanny correlation between the artists exhibited, and the number of pages devoted to their works in *Art International, Arts, Studio International,* and especially *Artforum,* which has had full-scale articles on a majority of the artists in the show, including cover stories on two, Dorothea Rockburne and Brice Marden, who are, one should in all fairness say, by far the most interesting of the lackluster lot. There are several possible explanations for this connection, sheer coincidence being the least likely in terms of the odds of probability. Attacked from many quarters for not keeping up with the avant-garde, MOMA may have felt intimidated by the audience and editors of *Artforum,* which lately has been hammering away at various aspects of MOMA's operations, from the political implications of its international exhibitions, to the fortunes of its trustees to its troubled staff relations; or, it is conceivable that in these days of shifting standards and lack of concensus, Miss Licht simply felt more secure in choosing artists whose reputations were buttressed by tangible reams of published support. To be as arbitrary as Dorothy Miller, one would have to feel a kind of confidence in one's own taste few curators today have the courage to display, given the aggressiveness with which the art press is ready to criticize the exclusion of their favorites.

Which brings us to the point of why it is necessary for an influential magazine such as *Artforum* to have a stable of favorites, whose careers seem not just advanced but invented by reviewers, critics, interviewers, documenters, or, if need be, by the artist him or herself in various auto-promotions. To understand the current state of affairs, one must recapitulate for a moment the history of the contemporary art press. During the fifties, *Art News* alone polemicized for the acceptance of Abstract Expressionism, which was largely

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ignored by museums and attacked by everyone else. *Art News* was an insider's magazine, the house organ of action painting. Its contents usually came straight from conversations at the Cedar Bar, translated for the outsider public by editor Thomas B. Hess or critics Harold Rosenberg and Clement Greenberg. A coterie magazine, committed to the New York School, *Art News* nevertheless ran hundreds of reviews in every issue, thereby deflecting some of the spotlight to cover the whole of the art community.

In addition the art community in those days was considerably smaller than it is today. In a recent filmed interview, Robert Motherwell commented that there were "perhaps fifty modern artists in New York" in the late forties, and that for the most part, they all knew each other, visited each other's studios and gave each other the courage to survive. Today, by contrast, there are tens of thousands of artists in New York, not to mention the rest of the country. They do not generally know each other, nor do they frequent the same restaurants and bars, exhibit together in mutual recognition of common ground, or give each other solace. Instead they compete for the attention of critics and curators which may raise them to prominence above the burgeoning crowd of their peers. While personal communication has broken down, the network of information provided by the widely disseminated art press has grown in importance. In addition to the regular art journals, *Art in America, Art International, Arts, Art News* and *Artforum,* there is a raft of new internationally distributed tabloid magazines such as *Art Press, Artetudes, Avalanche, Flash Art,* and *Data* that document earth works, conceptual art, performance and ephemeral art, video, etc.—in short, all those activities that reject the context of the museum and, theoretically, in their refusal to create-object-commodities, the ethics of the marketplace. Functioning as a substitute frame of reference for the museum, the total art press now represents a media alternative to exhibitions. As a result, art concepts, if not art works, can be disseminated via documentary photographs, artists' journals and critical commentary on ephemeral events. Because of the transient, topical quality of media, which appear in a timed sequence, but can be stored indefinitely, as opposed to the stable context of museum exhibitions which have an afterlife only as catalogues, artists today can have careers that are as insubstantial as the Paris air bottled by Marcel Duchamp, who anticipated this whole phenomenon in his portable *Boîte-en-Valise,* containing printed reproductions of his works.

Indeed it is no exaggeration to say that all the latest developments (with the possible exception of "land art" or Earthworks which uses landscape as a canvas) were already quite thoroughly explored by Duchamp; and that the minions of artists crowding the field of his lengthening penumbra are involved in little more than illustrated exegeses of his work. It seems noteworthy in this connection that no one seems capable of dealing with the complexity of

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Duchamp's last work, the immensely provocative *Etant Donné* in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. His pose of indifference and idleness to the contrary, Duchamp spent the last decades of his life neither playing games nor producing literary commentary, but in the actual labor of creating a material work that strikes an absolute balance between the cerebral and the sensual-experiential. This is a balance aspired to, but substantially lacking in the work of his conceptual followers.

As opposed to the immediate and indiscriminate simultaneous visibility of published art, *Etant Donné* can never be reproduced or even seen except by one person at a time, whose eyes must be fixed on the two peep-holes that provide the only view of Duchamp's astonishing encyclopedic tableau. Because it can never be moved from its permanent installation in Philadelphia, *Etant Donné* was not part of the recent Duchamp retrospective that created the only excitement MOMA has stirred up, outside of its internecine struggles for money and power, in recent years. Having presented the altogether laudable Duchamp exhibition, the question is why MOMA felt obliged to assemble an exhibition of artists dealing in a far less pointed way with a similar range of problems. Are there no more significant or conceivably previously overlooked artists of stature or quality less bolstered by external promotion to whom the Museum might have devoted its precious limited space? If not, why not simply show some part of its vast, distinguished permanent collection not on view? For it is depressing to compare the quality of *Eight Contemporary Artists* with the standards previously represented by the Museum of Modern Art; however, quality is no longer the issue, a point to which we shall return.

Neither an exhibition based on its own extensive reserves nor a show of older modernists, or even of younger artists working in the traditional media, however, would have had the same predictable news value nor the same insured reception by the art press that created the reputations of *Eight Contemporary Artists.* Rather than taking any risks, the show was the surest bet for art world approval or at least attention. In the past, art journals were content to report on exhibitions, reviewing the initiative of curatorial taste; now the situation appears reversed and museums feel compelled to feature the "stars" created by the media. This is a peculiar inversion, indicating perhaps a new relationship of the communications media to cultural institutions.

I am in the present context using the term "star" to describe artists catapulted to eminence through the pages and images of the media, for the word "star" appropriately characterizes the growth of a cult of personality. This promotional approach is rapidly replacing earlier criticism that established reputations on the basis of comparative quality, or even on the shakier grounds of significant innovation—the criterion used to justify the elevation of some reputations in the sixties. As the art world has extended more and more into the world of business and entertainment, suddenly art is noticeable to a

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public clearly not interested in aesthetic values, but in the sensation created by the huge sums of money attached to art now. Symptomatic of this curiosity is the *National Enquirer* style treatment recently given by *New York Magazine* to Jackson Pollock's personal life and the unbelievably vulgar article—with illustrations—on Rothko's suicide in the November issue of *Esquire*. That these names mean anything at all to a mass public is the result of the immense publicity attendant to the sale of Pollock's *Blue Poles* for an unprecedented sum and to the daily reporting of the trial concerning the disposition of Rothko's estate. The art made by these men, who have been turned into media celebrities after their deaths, however, remains mysterious and unintelligible to this public. But there is a suspicion that it might have a meaning. Through the media, the artist's personality is transformed into available cultural commodity, yet a curious numen of respect continues to surround their visionary works, suggesting that even if money can't buy love, it could conceivably, in today's world, buy God.

It is just as well that the appetite of this enlarged public is not for new art, but for new personalities, because finally there is little to differentiate one conceptual artist's work from another. One pale grid on the wall is pretty much like any other; one page of compulsive calligraphy is hardly distinguishable from another. Thus the shift in focus from art work to the persona of the artist is necessary in a greatly expanded art world. In an overcrowded and undercapitalized milieu, only media attention can single out the happy few from the madding crowd. Because communications media are by definition fickle, there is little loyalty to these overnight sensations. New personalities must be constantly created to satisfy not only the artist's ego, but also the critic's equivalent need to distinguish him or herself through the discovery of a definitive new talent.

Parallel to the substitution of "stardom"—instant prominence as opposed to a steadily growing reputation evolving over a long period—for artists is the redefinition of the critic, not as the judge of quality but as the artist's impresario. The disbelief that art has any intrinsic quality quickly leads to the conclusion that all an artist needs to succeed is a press agent who can write *Artforumese*. This cynicism is supported by attitudes toward success inculcated in art schools and promulgated by a new type of literature devoted to advising artists how to market their careers, manage their images, find galleries, collectors, etc., which along with books by accountants and lawyers about art, is the largest new category of art literature.

Bending to the artist's demand to be considered *sui generis,* critics are now reluctant either to compare or to link artists. This in turn has contributed to the thoroughly fragmented and unfocused quality of recent art criticism, which can in no way be considered dialogue, since it appears not to confront any general issues or to evaluate the artist so much as to assuage and aggrandize his

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ego. The rhetorical and hortatory tone of what has become critical apology rather than critical evaluation accounts for the reader's sense that these accounts, replete with mini-chronology and other appurtenances of a pseudo art-historical approach, resemble a form of promotion rather than the conventional value judgments of past criticism.

The rejection of "judgmental" criticism by the new critics of the seventies can be seen as part of the general rejection of authoritarian attitudes that characterized the collapse of leadership in all areas at the end of the sixties. The relativity of aesthetic judgments is an obvious analogue to the relativity of moral judgments, a possibly inevitable development exacerbated by the exposure of the excesses of authoritarian personalities. That the leaders have clay feet decimates the ranks of followers. For example, the recent documented revelation that Clement Greenberg wilfully changed the color of David Smith's sculptures after the artist's death has diverted focus from the contribution of Greenberg's evaluative criticism to his shortcomings as an authoritarian personality, adding to the skepticism regarding any criticism based on distinctions of quality. Without Greenberg as a figurehead, the circle of critics who unquestioningly accepted his premises has been eclipsed, to be replaced by another group of critics whose point of departure seems to be that no further distinctions can be made between good art and bad art and that, as Don Judd put it, a work need only be "interesting."

To an extent, I must agree that at present it is extremely difficult to qualify art. There is a general level of competence among younger artists who continue to practice the traditional arts, and an even higher level of technique, especially in terms of drawing, currently emerging as an important medium. Yet there are no towering personalities that cry to be singled out. It is even more difficult to make distinctions among artists using new media, who specifically disavow any interest in quality. There are two ways of looking at this situation: either it takes artists longer to mature than we have been willing to admit, and the present moment is one of fertile if slow incubation, or else we are experiencing a decline from the Golden Age of the School of Paris to the Bronze Age of the New York School, to the present Iron Age, and are destined to sink back into the primitivism of a new Dark Age, in which the traditional artistic skills will be lost along with literacy, as they were at the end of the ancient world. I prefer to believe the former.

Since we do not know the outcome of our current process of obvious cultural upheaval, statements regarding the future of art by responsible people tend to be hesitant and moderated. Museums are, as William Rubin points out in a recent interview in *Artforum,* nineteenth-century institutions, compromises between private and public patronage invented by the bourgeois democracies. The publication of this extended two-part interview underscores the intimacy of *Artforum*'s curious love–hate relationship with the Museum of Modern Art.

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Insofar as the Museum shows itself responsive to art media comment, to either its antagonism or approval, it exhibits the shift in the power balance between media and cultural institutions in which the media dominate.

In his interview, Professor Rubin, Director of the MOMA Department of Painting and Sculpture, posits the eventuality that modernism is a closed or closing issue. In his view, "Perhaps the dividing line will be seen as between those works which essentially continue an easel painting concept that grew up associated with bourgeois democratic life and was involved with the development of private collections as well as the museum concept—between this and, let us say, Earthworks, Conceptual works and related endeavors, which want another environment (or should want it) and, perhaps, another public." In his interview, Rubin makes it clear that the museum is not, by definition, an ambience hospitable to many of the latest art tendencies. In an article on *The Function of the Museum* published earlier by *Artforum,* Daniel Buren, one of the *Eight Contemporary Artists,* articulates in a fairly intelligent manner his hostility to the concept of the museum. "The Museum/Gallery instantly promotes to 'Art' status whatever it exhibits with conviction," he writes, with gratifying probity. Buren goes on to attack the concept of the timeless masterpiece as a fetish of museum culture and to further explore the (to him) repulsive tendencies of museums to conserve the art of the past.

Artists' attacks on museums are no news. The question is, if both Professor Rubin and Mr. Buren concur that Buren's work, which at MOMA consists of striped panels pasted to the wall, equal in size and shape to the windows they face in a gallery corridor, does not belong in a museum, what is it doing there?

Buren's nondescript and deliberately ephemeral, nonqualifiable pieces, vaguely resembling travesties of Stella's stripe paintings, are displayed at the Museum of Modern Art, one begins to suspect, because Buren has been particularly clever at keeping his name and images in print. In the world of the blind, the one-eyed is king; and given the present critical vacuum, Daniel Buren is a Superstar. To be admired and presented to an unwary museum public, his works need be neither good nor bad, they need only generate print and photographs.

At this point, a word should be said about the evolution of the concept of the "Superstar." The term was invented by Andy Warhol, who learned how to manipulate the media for his purposes from the original Great Imposter, Duchamp himself. A Superstar is anybody Warhol happens to notice, whose image and/or voice is recorded by his indiscriminate camera or cassette. The gag originally was that Superstars were just ordinary people, with no particular attributes of distinction. In fact, I recall once taking two insatiably curious Queens College students to Warhol's old Factory; by the time they left, he had made them Superstars in one of his lesser vehicles. Now *Interview,* Warhol's parody of *Modern Screen,* publishes interviews of real celebrities, or new

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Superstars Andy is creating, that expose the banality and ordinary drabness of the celebrated. Fame is exposed for what it is: a pure fabrication of media, independent of any intrinsic value or achievement. Sometimes there is an unconscious similarity between the inane *Interview* conversations with rock stars, models, actresses and socialites and *Artforum*'s new informal interview style, which Warhol in his infinite wisdom probably enjoys. For, having introduced the ideas that art has no quality and that the artist needs no special technical skill or training, so anyone can make art, Warhol has seen his worldview triumphant, not among the masses, whom in fact he might be seeking to liberate from the oppression of bourgeois culture, but by the priests of high culture itself. In his devastating equation of Liz Taylor and the Mona Lisa in similar silk-screen replicas, Warhol exposed the leveling process of the media. Reduced to the photographic reproduction, Liz is a star, and the Mona Lisa is a star, too. This confusion, which Warhol understood well enough to illustrate pointedly, has by now infiltrated museology and criticism sufficiently to produce an atmosphere of chaotic insecurity and uncertainty.

The creation of such an atmosphere was undoubtedly Warhol's intention, since it seems clear now that his goal was nothing less radical than the obliteration of traditional culture, not through direct attacks, but through the guerilla tactics of subversion and infiltration—the gradual erosion of values through the equation of diverse images once categorically antithetical. No head-on confrontation, no aggressive assaults, just a progressive take-over of the apparatus of culture by Smiling Andy, the Exploding Plastic Inevitable.

Personally I think Warhol is an important artist, the only genuinely revolutionary figure in the sixties. But I am not confused about what he stands for, which is the demolition of bourgeois cultural leadership through an appeal directly to the masses by way of common channels of information, the mass media. Warhol has succeeded by appealing to base curiosity, the mass taste for sensationalism, novelty and entertainment. And his success in creating a cult of personality has greatly impressed a younger generation of artists, some of whom, more interested in careers as artists than in making art, have imitated his tactics with a shameless lack of originality. Not long after Warhol had plastered the art world with multiple images of himself, exhibition announcements and art press advertisements were as likely to bear the photograph of the artist as a reproduction of his work. This is even more the case today, when so many artists have renounced making works entirely. For example, in the case of Joseph Beuys's widely circulated enlarged photograph of his own melancholic countenance, the poster, reminiscent of the old Hollywood broadsides and mail order autographed photos, became the art.

This is not the place to speculate on why artists are styling themselves after movie stars; suffice it to say that the impotence and irrelevance of seriousness

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of any kind in a democratic mass culture every day demonstrated by the election of movie stars to public office is demoralizing generally. The latest and most blatant bid for attention by an artist determined to promote a Superstar career is Lynda Benglis's double-page advertisement for herself in the November *Artforum,* in which the artist is seen nude, oiled, and masturbating an over-size penis, apparently extending from her own body, that is convincingly flesh-colored but rather unconvincingly enlarged. Shades of Linda Lovelace and Alice Cooper.

In the same issue of *Artforum* is an article on Benglis by Robert Pincus-Witten, a senior editor of the magazine. Commenting on Benglis's last exhibition poster, a rear view of the artist bending over, blue jeans dropped to her ankles, coyly peering over one shoulder, Pincus-Witten writes, "The cheesecake shot—in part homage to Betty Grable pinups—recalls for me a late version of Odilon Redon's *Birth of Venus.* Though this work can hardly have been in her mind, Benglis is strongly interested in Classical myth. Among her most recent works are pornographic polaroids rendered ambiguous by their cultural context—they are parodies of Mannerist and Hellenistic postures. Il Rosso Fiorentino and ithypallic kraters, a Leda without a swan." Mr. Pincus-Witten's erudition notwithstanding, the Benglis poster is less reminiscent of Redon than it is a virtual duplication of the October cover of a Times Square porno magazine ironically called *Gallery.*

I quote the passage above as typical of current art writing. Superstardom is accomplished by means of establishing greatness by association. This requires the development of a pseudo-art historical approach to self-serving trivia once reserved for the iconography of the great masters. This debasement of language and methodology seems endless. In an article on Brice Marden, Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe creates a ludicrously exalted pedigree for Marden's competent if innocuous wax panel paintings that are hardly more than serial variations on the theme of Jasper Johns's encaustic *Painting with Two Balls* (without the balls): "Like the thickness of Mallarmé's book, the space of a Marden is a physical volume that one recognizes as able to conceal and, therefore, to reveal anew. One remembers that Zurbaran lived in a country economically enmeshed with Northern Europe and ideologically centered on Rome. As if to invite comparison with *Gravity's Rainbow* which discovers America in its—primarily nineteenth century—European past, the *Grove Group* was painted after a trip to Greece, where the Ideal clarity of the Adriatic is a naturalistic fact of life." With a few deft associations, Gilbert-Rolfe constructs a new Pantheon: Mallarmé, Zurbarán, Pynchon, and Marden.

Paradoxically, the age of the artist-Superstar coincides with the actual waning of artistic individualism; the visible similarities of one work with another accompany a levelling of quality. For years, artists found it possible to

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conceive of themselves privately as individuals working within their own community of outsiders, in relative anonymity; now the rewards of art seem insufficiently gratifying and the artist competes with the porno star or the sado-masochistic rock entertainer for attention. Of course Warhol initiated this direction, but one has a sense that his actions and words are still commentaries on a situation, not merely extensions of it. Sex, as Duchamp once again was the first to notice, will inevitably excite a public, any public. Warhol maintained his distance from his subject matter by managing to make pornography boring. The new art pornography of Photo-Realism or the promotional advertisements of would-be Superstars no longer have any distancing mechanisms. They have become what they presume to be about: pornography and sado-masochism.

If there is a conscious aim in such publicly degraded behavior, then it must be the degradation of art. For some time I have felt that the radicalism of Minimal and Conceptual art is fundamentally political, that its implicit aim is to discredit thoroughly the forms and institutions of dominant bourgeois culture: to demoralize the public, preparing it to renounce the official culture, which is shown to be meaningless and consequently not worth perpetuating. This is certainly revolutionary strategy—a kind of abstract Warholism—although one cannot see how it prepares the way for the triumph of proletarian culture. On the other hand, weakening public trust in art may as easily pave the way for fascist counterrevolution, for a mass culture in the service of totalitarian ideals. Whatever the outcome of this strategy, one thing is certain: when an institution as prestigious as the Museum of Modern Art invites sabotage, it becomes party, not to the promulgation of experimental art, but to the passive acceptance of disenchanted, demoralized artists' aggression against art greater than their own. Once the Canon, the standard of excellence, the Museum seems prepared to join the ranks of those who have decided cultural standards are no longer worth defending, engaging in what amounts to a suicide pact of collaboration with forces that would annihilate excellence, replacing the criteria of sustained achievement with the transient overnight flash of meteoric Superstars.

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POEMS

MYTHOS

"Come, let us drown ourselves,
the world is asleep with evil;
we are evil in its embrace,
depicting death; let us out off our air
as a finish," and I sag
under the first impact of this whispering
in a voice toxic with its idea. Her arms
are tired arms, the veins stand out
as from hard work, and the voice suggests
the age of the weary whose fruit has been eaten.

In fright and simple surprise my head touches
the floor, my whole body borne heavily upon,
and at the first touch of this hard surface
my strength revives, at the idea of a surface.
From there down is the death being whispered.

My age of weariness is remote, my arms are fresh
as the young down upon them, my voice
a frightened one. I rise, partly from panic,
mostly from the impulse of which panic is the cry:
to live, to explore even weariness;
and my whole body sagging and withdrawn
begins to expand with its intake of terror,
the heart rapid, the chest quickly rising
and falling. The arms around me begin to fall
away. They cannot encircle what is beyond
their reach now, and the aged voice is silent.
Standing alone in my mounting ecstasy,
there is her shape watching me, the arms
at rest, sullenly hanging. But they cannot
rest for long, they have been trained
to hold; the voice vibrates with its temptation,
but I cannot be surrounded, nor the voice
enter me, whose size has become the very room,

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its walls my own bearing and firmness,
fright impelling me, and her arms embrace
themselves in a return motion without me,
her whisper inward, "Die, you must die,
you are the shape of this disease,"
and in my very fright, unable to bear the voice,
I reach out, as when walls loom upon the insane;
reach out and hold those arms,
and my own voice whispers in the ecstasy
that fright has awakened, "Live, it is your own
impulse, your arms are for lifting
and your voice speaks." The silence of her reply
is her answer, it pauses to grasp what has been said
to make it pause, while each successive moan
and motion of the arms, from memory, are halted
by my impulse, each motion weaker than the last
in my grip.

And now they are dancing together,
it began in a slow mournful weave
away from one another, as they held hands.
In this motion, suddenly aware of the rhythm
of worry, they accentuate it, out of pleasure
expressing themselves. The pleasure becoming
pronounced by repetition and heightened
awareness, the two swing off into a celebration
of the sorrow that has proclaimed itself.
It gives way to excitement of the steps
that led to it, and instead of weaving
and swaying, now bound off the floor
from short and breathless loops of sprung belief.
They will touch the ceiling of this paradise
by successive leaps, each building upon the last.

*

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THIS FALSE DESIRE

This false desire for life as I enjoy the sight of
leaves turning, brown, red, orange against the clear blue sky.
The leaves wave in the wind to urge me on to falsehood,
to make myself a chanter of life, a bard who calls to
others to live for the glory in living. I'm tempted
but I refuse, I think death has its pleasures too as I
surmise from the dead who lie very still to make the most
of it, strictly attentive to each syllable and motion of
their death as it attends on them stretched out like
children again, under the hypnosis of their mother's
crooning voice. Looking forward to that time, what have I
to be unhappy about, with so much peace and love in wait
for me.

*

1973

SHUTTING OUT THE CRIES

Shutting out the cries of the dying and hungry, the
imprisoned and the tortured, beginning life all over again
in innocence under the sun in sweat and energy for myself
as a person, to celebrate myself once again and for always,
now that I know the worst about myself who must die
in any case, I am on the handball court, shouting and
playing my way through the miseries of others, making
myself a token of the beautiful life.

Others of my mind join me in putting their best energies
into the game, shutting out what we know only too well.

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When we smile at each other on the court it is as if
to share this secret together and when one of us wins over
the other, both panting with exertion, there is a courteous
deference about the winner that allows the loser to
reconcile himself to his defeat in good spirits.

*

1973

YOU LIFT YOUR FACE

You lift your face to mine
with the sweet, sad expression
of the life of reservation
towards delight in love
of moments long ago and gone
that left their impress on your thoughts
and I in turn gaze back
with love newly acquired
in old age and the sadness
that is mine of love so long
delayed in coming meets yours
long languishing in fears.
We smile.

*

1974

David Ignatow

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"IN DEATH I KNOW WELL ENOUGH ALL THINGS END IN EMPTINESS"

to Dave Ignatow

I feel wonderful today after a long night
being naked with my wife.
For weeks we hated each other, refusing to speak or touch,
staring at each other across the table,
but last night when I got home from work
there was nothing,
nothing except the face of my dead father,
his blue eyes half open not seeing in or out.
I read the letters you wrote me when he was dying
and wept. You said that what we talked about
when I'd phone you before he died made you remember
how you're afraid sometimes of not finding anybody to help you
when you need it, of how we live trapped between the "clayey walls
of life," reaching up for a hand. Nobody else is
so kind. I hear the ocean hissing
under his window the morning he died
and my mother screaming down the halls after she found him,
couldn't wake him, then called me.
All those long weeks he was failing I'd call you
and you listened, so delicately aware of my pain that
it was your pain. Dave, I love you.
At night I drink if I feel death's leaning
just outside ready to smash in the door and begin on me.
But life cuts me open, I do what I want to, mostly.
Last night I came home angry and tired and told my wife to love me.
We stared at each other. Soon we touched.
Then we talked about anything
until we knew each other so deeply we took off our clothes and felt
everywhere and clung to each other and fucked
then lay touching until we slept.
Death does this with people.
Her face, his, yours, rise out of the darkness
that terrifies us. We can live.
Dave, I'm as old as you are.
Three pale blue lights burn in the building
across the street, a few lumps of snow
melt on the sill. My head floats on the pane the way it'll look

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years from now, nobody I know
to look at the world through it, day
and night sliding into each other.

EATING OUTSIDE

Fat pine boughs
droop over the vegetable garden's
sticks and leaves,
the moon's hazy face comes and goes
in the heat.
Beautiful women,
your skin can barely be seen.
The moon's gone. Clouds everywhere.
A pale hand curls
on the tabletop next to mine,
there's talk about work and love.
We're like the moon at this hour
as clouds swallow it or dissolve so
it glides through the shaggy limbs,
full, like the grief inside us,
then floats off by itself
beyond the last tips of the needles.
The trees are quiet. In the house
my daughters play the piano and laugh.
The family dog races in and out howling.
I keep trying to explain what we feel
but when I go back, like now, there's
the red hammock, the barbecue guarding
the lit back wall like a dwarf,
the self, awed by changes,
motioning to us as it leaves.
The candles on the table have blown out,
the upstairs lights are on.
Deep among those black arms, it pauses
clear, white, and unseen.

Stephen Berg

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DARK AGES

(For my father, George Williamson, 1898-1968)

When I think of you I think
of the outmoded ages: the Iron Crown
of the Lombards; processions and
bells; the slow and exact punishments,
the barbarous, tearful reunions;
and especially
what Huizinga mentions, the absolute
separation of day from night.

It is not just that I stood
before the turnstile in Duke Humphrey's library,
and saw the cloudy, waxy leather rise
to the heraldic rooftree,
your heaven, gained
by your shy illuminator's awe, that I
stand outside, barred
by the cruder presumptions that have made me, me.

As from before a great fire
your face emerges, dancing
in its old shame,
driving your Aunt Amanda
to church behind the thousand-farting drayhorse;
red, bulbous, elf-light, Swedish,
the rawest
and finest face I have yet seen on this earth,

Mr. Peanut and the old dill pickle,
and little Eheu,
and "Think, think, thou wast made in a sink"
as you scurried, half-naked, into the warm kitchen . . .

Once for a looker and all must agree
If I bashes the looking glass so I'll go free

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But your face darkens like a mountainside,
"Honor thy father and mother,"
and wanders off all day to read
in wounded, important displeasure.

And I and my friends appear, chanting
the names of our devils: Shit
    the First, Fuck the First,
    Mannerhater the Great,
and dream of the island where we are four kings
and the parents are kept in dungeons.

I see the long gray country rope you once
lashed me with,
for shaking it at you
when you called me a crybaby.

Then, nothing . . . rain-light . . . sad breath
as though still climbing the long stairs
of Chicago . . .
                One winter in Kansas,
you were measured for your first overcoat
and thought it was your coffin.
On the last day, you wished to be taken from the hospital
and thrown by the side of the road.

Here comes the rappers to send me to bed
They'll rapper my head off and then I'll be dead

But I can never get
around the crooked corners of your smile.

Alan Williamson

Note: For the italicized morris-dance rhymes, I am indebted to the mystery novel *Death of a Fool,* by Ngaio Marsh. Other borrowings from Huizinga and Donne.

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GOING TO THE MOVIES

Jonathan Baumbach

PIECES OF THE MASTERS

After a long drought, when it had begun to look as if the princes of distribution would never allow us a really distinctive movie again, a number of important films have become available. Most of them became available through the aegis of the New York Film Festival at Lincoln Center which, in the twilight of its prestige, seems more necessary than ever. I thought the highlights this year were Robert Bresson's *Lancelot of the Lake,* Alain Resnais's *Stavisky,* Bunuel's *The Phantom of Liberty,* Alain Tanner's *The Middle of the World* and two magical overlong movies by the little known master, Jacques Rivette *(Out One/Spectre* and *Celine and Julie Go Boating).* The Bresson and the two Rivettes were the cream of the cream.

Bresson's dreamlike *Lancelot of the Lake,* without an American distributor at this writing, details the degeneration of Arthur's court and Lancelot's love and renunciation of Guinevere. The film's real subject is Bresson's odd way of perceiving an event. He is a filmmaker mining a highly restrictive personal mode who surprises us with each new film at the variations possible within what seems like impossible limits. Parts of things not only stand for the larger whole but seem to replace it in Bresson's *mis en scene.* We see at a tournament merely the armored flank of a charging horse or the point of a spear crashing a shield. In another odd, beautiful scene we are shown Guinevere's reflection in a hand mirror or the mirror itself as the childlike queen, perceiver of shadows, stares into it while taking a bath. *Lancelot of the Lake* is a strange and mysterious work—Bresson the most mysterious of directors—which moves us not through action or characters but almost wholly through image and form.

Apart from the Festival, two other major directors, Bergman and Fellini, have had new films open this fall and we have as a holdover from the spring an impressive detective movie by Roman Polanski, an elegantly stylized homage to the genre. *Chinatown* is Polanski's most satisfying movie

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since *Cul de Sac* and at the same time a further limiting of his sights, an indication that he has made substantial compromises with his ambition as an artist. A smokey, yellow-toned takeoff on *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Big Sleep, less takeoff than homage, less homage than highly personal variation, Chinatown* is an eerie and obsessive work, an occasion for the director's romantic vision of a murderously corrupt and impotent world. Our own cynicism, really a romantic readiness to be disillusioned again and again, has caught up to Polanski's.

Unlike *The Long Goodbye,* Altman's detective movie to end detective movies, *Chinatown* adheres by and large to the conventions of the genre. But only up to a point. In the classic detective film, the world was a fairly awful place, dissolute and compromised, but the knightly hero, pure of heart and oblivious to his own mortality, usually found some way of setting things right. Polanski's world is not susceptible to restoration. The pursuer of justice, that romantic fool, is ineluctably doomed to grief.

Like so many recent films, *Chinatown* is about snooping, a profession to which the filmmaker brings a complicit sympathy. Polanski's hero, J. J. Gittes (Jack Nicholson), is a private detective whose specialty is marital infidelities. The film opens with a succession of semi-pornographic stills, our introduction to Jake Gittes's profession and the first of the film's several shocks. Although involved in the tawdriest aspects of his profession, Gittes turns out to be—that predictable irony—a more honorable man than a corrupt society can successfully sustain.

Whereas Altman's artsy cinematic manner is almost always in some kind of counterpoint to his narrative, Polanski's elegantly obtrusive style (made up principally of wide-angled shots) makes concessions to telling a story. What *Chinatown* and *The Long Goodbye* have in common, despite opposing approaches to similar material, is a self-conscious concern with personal signature. For whatever else it is, *Chinatown* is a triumph of style. It is one of those films that reviewers with an indifferent appreciation of form tend to say lacks substance. The narrative, within and beyond genre conventions, is tricky to a fault, the cynical ending something of a cheat. *Chinatown* punishes our best hopes. The new "seriousness" in American movies is the defeat of audience expectations. Nothing works out as we want it, says middlebrow cynicism, reflecting the impotence and despair of our public lives.

The stylization of *Chinatown* and the authority of Polanski's direction make the film's disturbing resolution seem almost reasonable. The film is full of wonderful ghostly details, a nostalgic pastiche of old detective movies transformed by a doomsday imagination. The embattled private eye of the forties genre movie tended to fall for unscrupulous women who would compromise his integrity, if they could, to save their own skins. The

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hero would have to renounce love, calling taking preeminence, to save himself and us all. Polanski's hero is doomed to be the occasion of destruction—the events of *Chinatown* are fatalistically determined—of whatever woman he falls in love with and tries to save, which is another version of the same romance. Like *Lancelot of the Lake, Chinatown,* within a different mythology, heralds the death of knighthood, the end of a mythic nobler time. It is a film that gets more beautiful on reseeing. *Chinatown* is full of moment to moment pleasures that are obscured on first viewing by the manipulations of the narrative.

2

One of the many attractions of Ingmar Bergman's pared down television drama, *Scenes from a Marriage,* is how close to the edge of sentimentality it plays without ever going wholly wrong. What interests me about the new Bergman is not its realism, though it pretends to a psychological realism and has been talked about in those terms, but its dreamlike quality—the film's real subject the unadmitted fantasy life of a marriage. Johan and Marianne (Erland Josephson and Liv Ullman) are unable to sustain their comfortable middle class marriage without the romantic occasion of crisis. Comfort and security in Bergman's desolate universe is a stultifying self-deception.

The first of the film's six scenes is, in part, an interview with the couple by a woman's magazine interested in presenting formulations of successful marriages. Johan is stiffly ironic with the interviewer, Marianne earnest and embarrassed. Both protest modestly the perfection of their marriage, which includes comfort, affection, security, compatibility, good relationships with children and parents, and an absence of crisis. This "perfect" marriage, one quickly discovers, is held together by the avoidance of conflict, by a long history of unadmitted deceits.

The film is made up of a series of reversals. Johan, who had presented himself as the more content of the two (Marianne had confessed to some restless feelings), announces one day that he has fallen in love with another woman and is going off with her. (The other woman never appears in the film nor do the couple's children, making their reality shadowy and unimportant.) Crisis makes Johan and Marianne tender to one another, opens up long denied resources of affection, revives love. It is as if to keep their passion for each other alive, to keep themselves alive, that Johan and Marianne have to give up living together.

And so it goes. They meet from time to time to talk of a possible divorce and to take measure of each other's life. When they meet finally to sign a

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divorce agreement, each as usual misrepresenting his feelings, the occasion ends in a violent physical fight. The transient murderousness of Johan's rage is another surprising reversal of expectation. Each revelation of character is undermined by the revelation to come. Each practiced deception is undermined by self-deception. The turnabouts of the characters give the narrative a texture it otherwise lacks. Impending separation invites passion: need provokes antagonism. Bergman is able to manipulate his characters' destinies through psychological paradox.

Johan and Marianne achieve their greatest intimacy at the end as lovers (divorced and each remarried) "in the middle of the night in a dark house somewhere in the world." The last scene is extremely touching. *Scenes from a Marriage* is about the resurrection of love in a becalmed marriage through the dramatized fantasy of separation and loss. Bergman's romantic notion that love requires temporariness and clandestine circumstances to thrive is nothing new. It is his authority as a filmmaker, the absolute assurance of his touch, that permits *Scenes from a Marriage* to transcend its romantic banalities. I like *Scenes* better than *Cries and Whispers*—the human Bergman more attractive to me than the facile metaphysician—and if the new film is not in a class with his best work, it is nevertheless a powerful and affecting experience. See it, as the ads neglect to say, with someone you love or used to.

3

The new Fellini film *Amarcord,* like the latest Bergman, arrives overburdened by extravagant praise. At the same time, much of the affecting quality of the film comes from an uncharacteristic and disarming modesty. To say one enjoyed *Amarcord* is to sound insufficiently enthusiastic.

An admirer of *The White Shiek, I Vitelloni, Nights of Cabiria,* some of *La Strada* and much of *8½,* I have found many of the later films, including *La Dolce Vita, Juliet of the Spirits* and *Satyricon,* repellently over-inflated. Increasingly, I find myself in temperamental opposition to Fellini's new work, put off by a vision which seemed to have exhausted itself in grandiose and grotesque self-advertisements.

Amarcord is a return to the concerns of *I Vitelloni,* although in Fellini's later more flamboyant manner. This lyrical memoir, more essay than narrative, covers the full turn of the seasons in a provincial seaside town in Italy in the early days of Mussolini. The whole town is its subject, though it focuses more or less on a group of irreverent teenaged schoolboys and one in particular called Titta. The movie opens with a town rite, the burning of

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the witch of winter, where we meet most of the characters of the piece. Gradisca, the town's tacky local beauty, is presented to us as the spirit of spring. A man passing in the street offers himself as narrator, talking into the camera, a risky self-conscious device brought off by the film's physical beauty and energy.

At a certain point in his career, a director may achieve an authority that makes anything he does, no matter how apparently whimsical, seem inevitable and right. Bunuel's absurdist *The Phantom of Liberty* is informed by that kind of authority and so is *Amarcord.* Fellini's characteristic obsessions appear here in recognizable variation. Old themes and characters recur as if all of the director's films were merely extensions of the same work. They pass before us like the figures in the dance at the end of *8½:* the restless horny schoolboys, the fat mama who offers sexual initiation, failed communications between fathers and sons, the dying saintly mother, the gallery of grotesques, midget nuns, men dressed as women, golden-hearted whores, comic priests, the playoff of sacred and profane.

Amarcord is made up of a number of loosely related comic and lyrical fragments, held together by the authority of Fellini's craft. In the most memorable scene of the film, a gentle loony, taken on a Sunday picnic by his family, climbs unnoticed to the top of a tree and refuses to come down, shouting from his perch, "I want a woman." This assertion of selfhood, the desperate human need of a creature perceived as less than human is both comic and affecting—a piece of Fellini's vision at its most eloquent.

I don't know if *Amarcord* is a major film in Fellini's canon, but at the very least it is a lovely minor one and a reminder that grandiose projects are not necessarily more substantial than modest ones. Fellini is an autobiographical director who reveals himself not through confession but like Bergman and Bunuel through authorial signature and obsession. *Amarcord* rides closer to the source of Fellini's gifts and vision than anything he has done since *Nights of Cabiria.*

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DR. JEKYLL by Susan Sontag

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refusing to take him on, telling him he is not fit for the Work. "You'll go only so far and then you'll quit."

"Don't plead with me," Utterson continues, without giving Newcomen time to bleat out his protests and promises. "And don't tell me you're unhappy."

"But I am! I'm desperate."

"You'll be much more unhappy if you start the Work with me. Right now you are sitting in a chair, comfortably."

"I'm not comfortable," Newcomen shouts.

Utterson waves his hand impatiently. "If you get up from the chair without being able to do this method's Work, it is better not to get up. You'll never get back to that first chair once you leave it. You'll be standing all your life."

And on still another day, in the same impressive room, a disciple—a journalist who lives in Washington, D.C.—is telling Utterson that he needs to put off his scheduled term of residence at the Institute until he finishes his book. "Forget about the book," Utterson says, frowning. "If you don't come now, later will be too late. Next spring you won't be able to come any more than you can kiss your own elbow."

Meanwhile, at the same time, in the midst of examining a sobbing child in the emergency treatment room of his South Bronx clinic, Jekyll feels a sharp twinge in his elbow.

Pounding the floor with his bare feet, Jekyll stands in a circle with nine other disciples near a small door at one end of the vast, bare, lofty room known as the Exercise Hall. Built with trusses, it resembles an old airplane hangar. Beyond the door is a cubbyhole with a bed, and one small window which allows a cheerful view of the orchard, where, years ago, a much-acclaimed Lithuanian poet spent the last months of her short life. Already in an advanced stage of the tuberculosis she contracted during her years in Dachau before coming to live at Oyster Bay, she was first assigned by Utterson to the cowshed; but when she became too weak to work she was moved here, and the solitary beatitudes she experienced before her mouth completely filled with blood constitute one of the most precious legends of the Institute. Utterson, whom some dissident disciples held indirectly responsible for her death, still mentions her occasionally in his Wake Up Talks. "Remember our lost sisters and brothers," he says. But Jekyll has no way of learning if her physical, as distinct from spiritual, health really was neglected. She died before he met Utterson or ever heard of the Institute.

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The slow percussive rhythms continue. Jekyll (who is taking a weekend refresher at the Institute) is in a pantomime-play that Utterson has devised called "The Struggle of the Magicians," whose story calls for the ten participants to be divided into five Bad Magicians and five Good Magicians. Everyone works in absolute silence. The movements are not strenuous, the opposite of the exercises Jekyll does at the gym with punching bag and barbells, of which Utterson disapproves. At the far end of the room, Utterson sits on a folding chair. He is wearing his tinted bifocals, which diffuse the impact of his pale blue eyes. What kind of magician is he?

Jekyll, who was told to play one of the Good Magicians, feels Utterson is making fun of him. Jekyll wonders how good he really is. Speaking for goodness are all his good deeds, his coherent dignified habits, his dedication as a doctor, his delights as a husband and father. Speaking for at least a vicarious unworthiness is his undeniable complicity with Hyde. Inside the citadel of virtue that Jekyll had built for himself was a romantic, banal longing for life untrammeled which had often brought him to the point of covering for Hyde's crimes. Jekyll cursed the weakness that prevented him from loving his own virtue, and had made him for so many years hanker after the thick-lipped siren's call.

"That's enough," Utterson calls out quietly. He gets up, walks across to the group, and puts his arm across Jekyll's back. "You're working too hard. Let your feet stay with the floor." An eerie peace invades Jekyll's body.

Utterson goes to a plump solemn girl, puts his arm around her waist, and speaks a few words against her cheek. She bursts into tears, a radiant smile on her face. As Utterson moves away, the other eight crowd around her and touch her tentatively. Jekyll longs for Hyde to be here, so he could wrap him in some heavy fraternal embrace. They lift the sobbing girl, carry her to the center of the floor, lay her down, and sit around her. Someone begins to hum. Jekyll gazes at the girl's body. He pardons Hyde, he pardons himself. Utterson stands behind him.

Jekyll has not always felt so haunted. It was when he stopped working regularly with Utterson that he began to lose his nerve. He could not cut himself completely free from Utterson, either. But he has a horror of confinement, and most of Utterson's pupils end up being content to linger in one room. They come to Utterson to expand their energies, but the old man puts some kind of spell on them. Jekyll is struggling to free himself from the magician's spell; but he needs help, he needs love, he needs touch.

In the stone bath-house recently constructed on the precincts of the Oyster Bay estate, Utterson is telling dirty stories, an evening custom. And calling for more. His embarrassed disciples are doing their best to amuse him. their custom. In their apartment near Lincoln Center, Jekyll is gazing tenderly

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at his wife. He presses his moist face into her long blonde hair. "I love you," he gasps. "Have you any idea how much I love you?"

They lie interlaced on the living room couch; the children are asleep. In the bath-house a band of male pupils, under Utterson's direction, have finished spreading their bodies with a special clay imported from Turkey that removes all hair and leaves the skin elastic and soft. Naked except for the towels around their hips, they file into the steam room. Loving is getting fat, Jekyll thinks. And loving is getting very, very thin.

Jekyll feels the energy leaking out of him. Then this is love, too. This slow but unremitting leakage, this sensation of lying with veins open in a bathtub filled with warm water. He gets up and dries off. Meanwhile Utterson whips one of his older pupils across the buttocks with his damp towel and breaks into volleys of laughter as the grey-haired flabby man stumbles backward with the unexpected pain. "That's what you've never learned," shouts Utterson boisterously. "How to play!" The bewildered man, of a generally trusting nature, hovers in the steamy corner, not sure whether he's about to laugh or to cry. "Don't be so serious!" Utterson yells, brandishing the towel above his bald dome like a cowboy's lasso. "Play!" Jekyll fidgets, then sits down again on the edge of the couch. As he unbuttons his wife's blouse with one hand, he would like to grab hold of that towel with the other hand, pull with all his might, and send Utterson sprawling face down onto the warm planks.

Lying down, heart's ease, body's home, floating, sleeping, touching, sliding, climbing. The darkness, the dazzle. Warm smells, worn sheets. But it doesn't last.

In bed with his wife, Jekyll is seized by a fervid absence of mind. Needless to say, it is signalled by an absence of body. His wife, at first bemused by the failing rhythm of his embraces, adapts herself and for a few moments it goes well this way, too. She clasps him tightly, gratefully. But Jekyll doesn't seem to understand, and slows down even further. Now his wife is disheartened. Sighing, she whispers his name, then pulls his earlobes. "Where are you, darling?"

Utterson is straining over his nightly push-ups by the side of his enormous bed. For a man of his age and bulk, who eats and drinks as immoderately as he does, he's in better shape than he ought to be, as Jekyll has often noticed. Jekyll cannot imagine who lies in the freshly-made bed, waiting for Utterson.

"Darling!"

Jekyll, diffident now, smiles. "I thought I heard something," he whispers.

"The baby?"

"No. In my head. Doesn't matter." He goes on smiling.

"But it does."

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"It's only that I'm always thinking about you," Jekyll says despondently. "Even when I'm near you."

"But that's just it," she says. "You're not close to me."

Utterson, feeling sudden nibblings of pain on the left side of his chest, hastily climbs into bed. The figure under the covers rolls over expectantly, unfurling the blankets. Jekyll switches on the reading lamp and checks his watch.

Jekyll is thinking of the uncanny ability that Utterson has to transmit energy from himself to others. Jekyll has experienced this famous power several times, as well as witnessed Utterson practicing on others,

FLASHBACK, to less troubled days—days in which Jekyll found Utterson's conversation extremely funny, when it was not breathstoppingly wise. Once, years ago, when Jekyll was severely depressed, possibly suicidal, he drove out—without telephoning first—to Oyster Bay. Utterson, extraordinarily gentle, fatherly that day, received his visitor in his bedroom. Seeing him, Jekyll felt excited, feverish; his head began to pound, as it's doing tonight, in bed with his wife.

"You're sick." Utterson put one arm around Jekyll's shoulder. "Don't talk." He put Jekyll in a chair. "I'll give you coffee," he said, all the tenderness imaginable in his voice. "Drink it as hot as you can."

Jekyll remembers sitting at a table while Utterson poured coffee from the old battered thermos he used to keep beside his bed into a saucepan, and put the saucepan on a hotplate. Jekyll remembers being unable to take his eyes off Utterson, and realizing that Utterson looked desperately weary: he'd never seen anyone look so tired. Jekyll remembers slouching over the table, sipping at his coffee, when he became aware of a sudden uprising of energy within himself. It was as if a violent electric blue light flowed outward from Utterson and entered into him. As this was happening, Jekyll felt the tiredness leach out of him; but at the same moment Utterson's preposterous heavy body sagged and his face turned grey as if it were being drained of blood. Jekyll looked at him, amazed.

Jekyll remembers that when Utterson saw him sitting erect, smiling and full of energy, he muttered, an urgent tone in his voice: "You're all right now. I must go." Jekyll remembers leaping to his feet to help him, and Utterson waving Jekyll away and hobbling slowly out of the room.

Jekyll remembers Utterson being gone and, while he waited, blankly savoring an exquisite sense of well-being. He was convinced then (and is convinced now) that when Utterson transmits energy from himself to others, it can be done only at great cost to himself. But it became obvious that Utterson knew how to renew his own energy quickly, for Jekyll remembers being equally

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amazed by the change in him when he returned to the bedroom fifteen minutes later. Utterson looked almost like a young man, alert, smiling, and full of good spirits. He said that this was a fortunate meeting, and that while Jekyll had forced him to make an almost impossible effort, it had been a positive experience for both of them. He then announced that he and Jekyll would eat *together, alone: an enormous lunch, for which he would break open his best* bottle of fine old Armagnac.

Jekyll remembers that as they ate this lavish meal, downing glass after glass of Armagnac, Utterson told Jekyll to talk about whatever had been troubling him. Jekyll remembers finding it difficult to begin, for at that moment he felt he had no problems at all. He had never felt better in his life. And Jekyll remembers that when he finally managed to explain his griefs and fears, Utterson listened without comment, and said finally that what Jekyll had told *him was of no real importance, nothing to worry about.* End of FLASHBACK.

Jekyll feels so weary now, as he holds his wife. Conceivably, he could throw a line to Utterson that would run from his solar plexus to Utterson's burly right hand. He would tug on that line, a signal of distress, and Utterson, wherever he is—in Oyster Bay or in the city—would feel the pressure, would realize that Jekyll is in trouble, would turn on that violent, electric blue light, whose rays would be transmitted along the cord connecting them straight back to Jekyll's chest, and he would feel a new, pure uprising of energy, he would feel wonderful, he would feel his problems were of no importance. But for this to happen, Utterson would have to not be too busy with whatever he's doing, sacred or profane, right now. And he would have to understand the exact sense of Jekyll's signal as well as know who it comes from, who among his many rebellious ex-pupils. And Utterson would have to be willing, at least for a while, to imperil his own forces. To be himself, at least for a while, very very tired.

Still in his surgeon's overalls, Jekyll tilts backward in a chair in the third floor staff lounge of the clinic, having just come from the operating room after a risky, bloody two hours which have saved his patient's life. He allows himself one cigarette. While, somewhere else, a war is going on, bombs are falling, flesh is being punctured and burned, hospitals with bamboo walls and thatched roofs are being targeted for additional bombing, Jekyll looks at the backs of his capable hands, at the short pale hairs sprouting from each pore—at the intricate tiny lines connecting each pore that make a web, like an aerial map. Or *a game.*

While a nurse comes in to bring Jekyll the latest report on the patient's condition (good) and stays long enough to flirt with him, the war goes on—an ache in the bones, an ache in the gut, an ache in the heart. To supplement the

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televised daily doses of atrocity, three-week tours by helicopter are available for civilians to observe it at first hand on their vacations. Endless numbers of little, small-boned, dark, fine-featured people, the men with smooth hairless faces, the women with long black hair down their backs, still youthful-looking even in middle age, carrying rifles and spears, get massacred day after day. How are they replenished?

Jekyll, more monogamous than ever, starts thinking about his wife's legs and decides they are not just shapelier than the nurse's but may be the prettiest legs he has ever seen in his life. The nurse leaves the room with instructions about 5 cc. of a new medication for the patient still lying unconscious in the recovery room.

Utterson declares it is a waste of spirit to fret about the war, that human folly will always persist, that most people are idiots who sleep right through their whole lives, and that the sole duty of the few who are struggling to become awake is self-cultivation. For the treatment of melancholia brought on by thinking about the war, Utterson recommends several strenuous exercises, spiritual and physical, and a re-reading of Ch. 109 of *The Strange Case of Cain and Abel.* Deciding that he is tired of trying to cultivate himself, improve himself, transform himself into a well-rounded, balanced person, Jekyll also decides that even if he can't be Hyde he can still seek his help.

"Hey, look who's slumming!" Hyde shrieks gaily through a broken windowpane, as the taxi deposits Jekyll next to the mailbox by the road, a little outside of Plattsburg, New York. The gaping mailbox, flag down, is crammed with ads. Jekyll strides across the large square of ragged crabgrass, gains the porch, then steps over a heap of wet newspapers, each folded and held together by a rubber band, busily decaying into one another at the threshold of the blistered front door. Another windy day, and rain in the wind.

Hyde is spinning about at the open door (equipped with neither bell nor knocker), seizing Jekyll's gabardine raincoat and hurling it onto a hook next his black cape in the corner of his seedy lair. When Hyde slams the door shut, Jekyll half expects to hear the clank of a lock and chain.

"Let's take a look at you, buddy," Hyde growls, continuing the mock cheerfulness. "Just as good-looking and uptight as ever. You haven't changed a bit!"

Jekyll can't return the compliment. If it is a compliment. In the three months since Jekyll last saw Hyde, trotting round and round the World Trade Center, the younger man has aged fearfully. More of his thinning stringy hair has fallen out. Right this minute, with several days' growth of beard on his haggard face, he looks as old as Jekyll actually is. Jekyll feels a pang of paternal concern.

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With extraordinary quickness, Hyde shoves Jekyll onto the top of a packing crate, then pours some orange juice into two tall bluish glasses, lacing both with what Jekyll soon discovers to be gin (it comes from a turpentine bottle), then crouches gleefully on another crate.

"What's up, doc?" he cackles.

Those two bluish glasses that had been placed on a broken rattan table strike Jekyll as odd. As Jekyll knows, Hyde lives alone since his girlfriend walked out on him; they suggest that he had been expecting someone. Himself? Jekyll has neither written nor wired Hyde (who has no telephone) about his visit this evening. Could someone have informed Hyde that he was coming?

Jekyll, taking a sip of his drink, starts by asking about Hyde's house.

"You didn't come all the way up here to rap about my crummy house!"

Jekyll wonders if living in the country bores Hyde, after the glamorous dangers of city life: the thrill of pursuing his victims, the excitement of being chased by the cops. "Don't rush me," says Jekyll.

"Sorry, man," Hyde croaks. "I guess I'm just bouncing off my own peeling walls, panting to hear what's on your mind."

"You're acting as if you already knew what it was," Jekyll ventures—in case Hyde should have acquired some of Utterson's gift of clairvoyance and already knows everything he is going to say.

"I do."

Jekyll fights down his anxiety. "Then you've no reason to be impatient."

"Shit, that don't mean I know every last word," Hyde squeaks plaintively.

"I'm still wondering why you stay up here," says Jekyll.

"Don't knock it, man. You should have seen this dump when I moved in." Hyde sounds almost wistful. "I did all the work myself, just like at the Institute. With my own two hands."

"I know," Jekyll murmurs distractedly—while gazing at Hyde's corded, predator hands, their backs sheathed with dusky fur, and noting that the tranquillity of country life has not helped Hyde to stop biting his nails.

"See," Hyde croaks, a triumphant gleam in his small eyes. "You know everything, too."

"Considering my problem," Jekyll retorts gloomily, "that wisecrack is in awfully bad taste."

"Bad taste"—Hyde's voice becomes strident—"is my specialty, man." He clenches his shrunken hairy fists. "Want to make something of it?"

"No," says Jekyll.

Bad taste is Utterson's specialty, too. But whereas that seems perfectly natural with Hyde, given his slum background and his aggressive lack of aspirations to virtue, Utterson's case presents a real problem for Jekyll—for everyone, probably, who has ever come under Utterson's authority. Utterson's ribald, sadistic sense of humor must be reconciled with the gravity of his claim

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to spiritual leadership, just as his frank animal smells are blended with the sly but undeniable odor of sanctity. With Hyde there is no problem. That his dingy living room reeks of urine doesn't at all disturb Jekyll, who, as a doctor, can't afford to be squeamish anyway. Hyde is Hyde. But Utterson is always more than Utterson. Or less. And Utterson insists that his admirers accept everything about him. They're not permitted to subtract—or add—anything.

It's like the words that stream from Utterson's mouth, which never quite closes even when he's not speaking. Long smutty stories. Platitudes and truisms about the good life. And genuine, subtle, almost inhuman wisdom. But Utterson wouldn't let you throw out the first two parts and just keep the third. You have to keep it all. Is that the secret of harmonious development, of the well-rounded personality, of not being one-sided? If it is, Jekyll will never find the way: he is incapable. And most likely that isn't the secret. Utterson never encourages anyone to imitate him. On the contrary. His bullying, sardonic treatment of his disciples suggests that the liberties he grants himself are definitely not for them. Otherwise, how could Utterson get to lie in bed late, wallowing in his breakfast, while everyone else at the Institute, pupils and staff alike, rises at 6 a.m. each morning and spends most of the day chopping down and pruning trees, tending the vegetable gardens, milking cows, preparing meals, sewing clothes, mowing lawns, paving driveways, constructing new buildings. "Work," Utterson's basic teaching method, for them; capricious potency, afloat on the sea of liberty, for himself.

Jekyll notices a whip hanging on the wall of the bleak room, presumably a souvenir left over from Hyde's s & m escapades. Utterson handles his disciples as if he were a wild animal tamer. But Utterson, who is no stranger to sadism, physical and mental, disapproves of whips. Having observed that each person gives off radiations and emanations (that constitute, according to Utterson, the person's "essence"), Utterson uses the octave upon octave of emanations which he is capable of emitting—to subdue, subjugate, harass, harness, and finally liberate each of his disciples, near and far, to become a true will. Jekyll would prefer the whip.

In the meantime, Jekyll has sedately abandoned his packing crate for a mauve plastic couch scarred with cigarette burns across the room, while Hyde, someone who has great difficulty in keeping still and can't remain seated in one place for more than a few minutes, hops off his crate. He is getting more orange juice, pouring in more gin: more gin than orange juice this time. While taking note of Hyde's taste and what it reveals about his deterioration—from satanic to eccentric—Jekyll approves of the orange juice since Hyde has always suffered from a Vitamin C deficiency. He refuses a second round for himself with a wave of his hand.

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"God damn love," wails Hyde.

"What did you say?" Jekyll asks.

"I said," Hyde lowers his raucous voice to a growl, "God damn love."

Hyde empties his glass in two gulps. Not only does Hyde seem to have lost most of his flair for moral turpitude, but this vehement drinking indicates that he is going soft. Jekyll is discouraged. "God damn love," he thinks he hears Hyde hiss once more.

Hyde can't seem to keep still, darting about the living room from the liquor on the rattan table to his packing crate and back again, like a dyspeptic gorilla. Jekyll leans back on the mauve couch, tired from watching him move so much. He feels drowsy, under water. How long must he go on chasing after Hyde? Are they to go round and round, continuous as a frieze round an urn? He'll never overtake him. Hyde, despite his odd gait, is incredibly light, mobile. You couldn't catch him with a rope, as one could imagine catching Utterson—a big, bull-like man who moves with ponderous slowness, and generally prefers to be enthroned in a chair or, whenever possible, lying in bed. Jekyll imagines how he might lasso Utterson and drag him here, to continue the conversation. It's not with Utterson, though, but with this morose manic lout circling around the room that he must try to communicate.

At least the doctor in Jekyll remains undaunted by Hyde's corrosive antics. Jekyll notes that Hyde's constitution looks embattled now. From what can be glimpsed of Hyde's chicken-breasted frame through his wrinkled work-shirt, two of whose buttons are missing, he's lost weight and his *cigarette cough rivals Camille's.*

Making one more effort, Jekyll also manages to rouse the eloquent, long-suffering aspirant to psychic unity; and from the couch he aims that part of himself, like a gun, at Hyde. Addressing Hyde, he begins a monologue. Hyde gulps down more gin while Jekyll names the main points on the map of his discontent, expounding on his heartfelt desire to change his life. Utterson comes in for heavy savaging, he and that motley crew of disciples and bastards camping out in Oyster Bay at the Institute for Deprogramming Potential Human Beings.

"But the Work did you a lot of good, right?" Hyde mumbles, still on the run.

How could Jekyll deny that the Work has helped him? That, without the Work, he wouldn't have become as gifted a physician as he is today; that he wouldn't be as calm, controlled, steady, self-observing; that he couldn't as easily inspire trust in and impose his will on colleagues, subordinates, and patients. "Utterson isn't the problem," Jekyll admits. "It's me."

"I don't get it," whines Hyde, abruptly dropping to all fours and crouching in a corner.

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"It's . . . wanting to give everything up. I'd like to be. . . . Don't laugh! I'd like to be you."

"Wow!" Hyde claps the palm of his hand to his rodent-like forehead. "What a load of middle-class crap! You'd like to be me?" He lurches up, awkward as ever, from the floor. "You'd like to lead my trashy life? Man, you are clean out of your ever-loving, nit-picking skull!"

"But," says Jekyll, "if your life depresses you, why don't you move back to the city?"

"And get busted?" screeches Hyde. "Thanks a lot!"

"But things can be arranged, you know that. I'll tell Lanyon."

"That asshole?" Hyde pivots, the bottle in his claw. "He's senile."

"He's not. And you're drunk."

"Just because you keep that shyster alive with these injections of yours, you don't have to defend his health," Hyde rants. "Lanyon couldn't get a D.A. to reduce charges on a baby who landed in the Tombs for stealing a diaper."

"Don't drink so much. I hate to think what your liver looks like."

"Cool it, man!" Hyde snarls, halting his lame progress around the room. "Want to see my tracks?" He fumbles with the left sleeve of his work-shirt, tugging it up over his elbow. "Well, I'm clean now, see! And I owe it all to—good—old—booze!" He pats the bottle and then slams it down on the rattan table. Utterson raises his glass of Armagnac, scans the long oval table in the refectory, and proposes a toast. His favorite subject for a toast is a certain kind of idiot. During a high-spirited dinner several years ago, Utterson had invented a whole taxonomy of spiritual retardedness; "idiots," as he insists on calling them, were classified into ingenious categories and sub-categories, the interest being to determine into which category each person at the table falls. The game is still being played,with pupils nervously interrogating themselves, and Utterson reserving the right to pronounce the final verdict. Utterson sips the Armagnac and grins.

Jekyll is continuing. "Well, if you won't come back to the city, would you consider moving somewhere else? We could. . . ." He hestitates, then plunges. "We could go somewhere together. I mean, I'd go with you."

That does stop Hyde's gyrations, at least momentarily. "What would you want to do that for? Man, you have really flipped your wig!" Jekyll feels, through the strong roots of his hair, his scalp tingling.

"I know it sounds crazy. . . ." Jekyll pauses. "But we wouldn't have to stay in one place. We could be on the road most of the year."

"Hey, what is this? A proposition? Don't tell me that after umpteen years of happy marriage you've discovered you're some kinds of fruit. Oh, man, that would be too much!" He falls to the floor, flops over like a dog, then

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stretches out on his back, convulsed with laughter.

"Cut it out, Eddy!" Jekyll, leaning forward on the couch, is embarrassed. "You know it's not that. It's because . . . I've realized I don't have enough . . . enough imagination. You know what I mean?"

Hyde waves his spindly legs in the air, while pushing both hands into his ribs to stop laughing. "And you think if you hang around with me"—choking, he sits up—"you'll get more . . . imaginative?" Now he's coughing, too.

"Drink some water."

Hyde, shaking his head sullenly, staggers to his feet and starts loping around the room again. "I don't get it." He is breathless, wheezing. "You want to toss your career in the garbage can, move out of a rent-controlled apartment, leave your old lady—"

"No," Jekyll interrupts, "I'd like my wife to come with us."

"Far out!" Hyde snorts. "Okay, you want to dump your apartment, drag your wife away from her friends, kiss off Utterson, let down all those poor coons waiting on line at your clinic who think you're Dr. Schweitzer, run out on all those nurses who you never ball. . . ." Jekyll nods. "For what?"

"Because I'm not free."

"Free!" Hyde explodes drunkenly. "Grow up, you big baby."

"But it's true. I live a life that's . . . all laid out. Nothing is going to happen to me. I mean, I know what's going to happen to me. I'm thirty-eight, and with my health and family history I'll probably live to be ninety. But I could already write my obituary."

"Big momma's baby!"

"You've already said that."

"Freedom!" Hyde rubs his fist against his eyes. "Man, have you got an old head!"

"Right," Jekyll says. "That's why it's good for me to be with you."

"Well, don't start thinking I can help you! Jeezus, I've got problems of my own." He starts pacing around again. "One more minute and you'll be talking about happiness." He stops in his tracks, gazing fiercely at Jekyll. "Or love." His small eyes are reddening.

"Look, Eddy, I'm really sorry about the way she. . . ." Jekyll sees Hyde's swarthy face going livid with distress. "About . . . what's happened to you."

"God damn love," moans Hyde. He wipes his nose with the back of his left hand, and pours himself another drink.

But nothing, least of all despair, seems to stop Hyde's incessant, ungainly motility. Jekyll's left foot is starting to fall asleep, and Hyde is getting more animated. Jekyll starts thinking about how late it is. He rises from the couch, stretching his arms voluptuously above his head.

"Don't split!" Hyde screeches. As Jekyll drops his arms to his sides, Hyde bounds over to where he's standing. "You have to crash here tonight anyway."

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Thrusting the compact dial of his face close to Jekyll's chest, he whispers, almost gibbering: "You missed the last train."

Jekyll grimaces, then nods. But he doesn't sit down.

"What's wrong now?" Hyde demands belligerently.

"I'd like something to eat."

"How come?" Hyde leers. "I ain't hungry."

Jekyll pushes him aside and heads for the john in the hallway. As he is about to flush the toilet, Hyde starts banging on the door. Jekyll pulls the chain, but nothing happens.

Hyde keeps banging. "Hey!" He kicks the door. "I'll ask my ma to whip up something."

"Does your mother live here with you?" Jekyll calls back through the door.

"Sure." Hyde kicks the door again. "Since . . . since that broad left."

"But you hate your mother! I remember your telling me that years ago."

"So what!" screeches Hyde. "She's doing her thing. I'm doing mine. She don't get in my way."

Jekyll opens the door. "I shouldn't be bothering you with my problems."

Hyde is just outside. "No sweat!" Hyde's mouth crumples into a jaunty sneer, meant to be friendly, that shows a mouthful of tartared teeth. "I'm glad you popped up, Hank. And I dig your being so out front with me, even if you have gone off your nut."

Jekyll demurs once again, although he has by now given up the hope of persuading Hyde. "Try to put yourself in my position," he adds at the end.

"Are you kidding? Why should I want to do that!" Hyde snarls, while at that very moment Utterson, in whatever position he is sitting or lying, is telling one of his disciples that, if she listens carefully, she will learn how funny the "truth" can be.

The next morning, Hyde's ivory-faced mother brings Jekyll an English muffin and a cup of Nescafé in bed. Meanwhile, Utterson is being served his breakfast by the sleepy-eyed Poole. Jekyll wants to ask about Hyde—is he awake? is he hung over?—but decides against it and rolls briskly on to his stomach, pretending to doze off again. Better not ask the old woman any questions, and possibly get some in return. Jekyll remembers a rule of military history, best illustrated by Pearl Harbor, according to which it is difficult to hear the true signals because of the surrounding noise—that is, other messages.

After she leaves the attic room, Jekyll gets out of bed, biting into the muffin. Tall elms rear above the pitched roof of faded slate outside the window; the eaves' gutter is clogged with leaves.Wearing a cashmere dressing

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gown, Utterson emerges into the corridor and shouts at one of the pupils to go outside and rake the leaves. Then Jekyll puts his flannel pants and corduroy jacket back on, goes down the back stairs, through the kitchen (where Mrs. Hyde is squatting before the TV, set at Channel Three, the War Channel), and into the living room. Hyde is kneeling in the corner, fixing a bicycle. It seems strange to think of Hyde having a bike and not his lethal Harley-Davidson.

"Awake long?"

Hyde looks up and grunts. A different creature from last night: clear-eyed, humanoid, more brutal, more youthful, more frightening. He scratches his bald spot with a screwdriver.

"It's a beautiful day, ain't it?" Jekyll continues.

"Don't patronize me, pal," Hyde says in a menacing tone. "If I want to I can talk as good as you college boys any day." He turns back to the bike and does something with the pliers.

Jekyll pauses indecisively, then takes a step in Hyde's direction. "What's the Sunday train schedule?"

"Want to leave, huh?" Hyde doesn't look up.

"I've got to get back by dinner time."

Hyde slams the pliers down on the floor and puts his hands on his razor-like hips. "You mean we're not going to elope and live happily ever after, robbing banks together like Bonnie and Clyde?" Hyde pushes his voice up to a falsetto.

"That's right," Jekyll says. "So what about the trains?"

"There's a local at 3:40 that'll get hubby back home just in time."

Jekyll turns away, in irritation.

"No, wait!" croaks Hyde, standing up and hopping over his tool kit and the bicycle chain. "I've been thinking about our rap last night. . . ."

Jekyll turns back.

"Listen, I figured it out. You don't need me. Do it on your own."

"Meaning what?" says Jekyll.

"Do something! Violent." Hyde hisses. "Rob a blind newsie. Molest a child. Mug a fag. Strangle Utterson. Put—" Hyde stops, seeing Jekyll's face blanch, and slaps his stringy thighs. "I got you there, didn't I?" he jeers. "Wow, that horny old geezer really has you by the balls, don't he? You should take what he's got that's good for you and run with it. Like me." As if to illustrate what he is saying, Hyde is hopping spastically around the room on one foot.

"Hey, man, didn't you ever commit a crime?"

Jekyll doesn't answer. He is thinking of all the imaginary crimes he has committed, and of all the real crimes he has never imagined. If only he had the force, not the physical but the moral force, just to place his hands on

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Utterson's heavy veined neck.

"You know," Hyde sneers. "Violence. V-I-O-L—"

"I know how it's spelled," groans Jekyll. He feels a painful contraction around the heart. "*What* violence?"

"Well. . . ." Hyde pauses, giving a theatrical (or a gorilla's) imitation of someone thinking. "You're not up to offing Utterson, we got that. Right? So . . . so, how about something easy for a start? Like burning down the Institute. You could always hope that nobody'll get killed."

"You think I'm capable of that?"

"You could try." Hyde has stopped moving, and is picking his nose. "Maybe you could get someone to help you."

"I don't need any help."

"You don't, huh? That's not how you were coming on last night."

Jekyll, who wants to leave, is standing near the hook where his coat is hanging.

"Suppose," Hyde mutters, borne up by a new current of energy, "suppose I tell you someone's already planning to trash the Institute."

"Are you telling me?"

"You don't believe me." Hyde's face flushes.

"I might, if you explain how you know about it."

"I can't reveal my sources." Hyde clears his throat and spits on the floor. "But I'll tell you when. This month, the night of October 16th."

Is it envy or terror that Jekyll is feeling? "Are you . . . going to tell Utterson?"

Hyde doesn't answer. He is prancing aound his bicycle.

"You've got to!"

"Why?" rages Hyde. "He's telepathic and clairvoyant and all that, ain't he? Let the creep figure it out for himself."

Jekyll doesn't have a reply for this. But who isn't clairvoyant and telepathic? Is seemed like a cheap trick. Don't we all inhabit the same space? Jekyll is thinking about crime. He is thinking about Utterson.

A quotation from Utterson: "When the devil has been caged too long, he comes out roaring." Jekyll has the feeling that something is coming to him from the patches of blue in the cloudy sky he sees through the broken windowpane, from the sounds, the smells, the temperature outside—something that he is trying to keep away. Then he abandons himself; a voice whispers over and over: "Free, free, free!"

There is a scene that Jekyll once witnessed, which goes like this. An aged man with white hair is walking along Riverside Drive late one summer evening and another man, young, very small, is coming toward him. When they get near each other, the old man nods with stately, unfashionable politeness, and stops.

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It looks as if he is asking directions. He is pointing. He has a complacent beautiful face, and is probably a German-Jewish refugee scholar who lives near Columbia University. The short youth in the black leather jacket stands facing him, tapping on a guitar that he carries. He doesn't answer. Then, like the propeller of an old plane, he gradually begins trembling, vibrating with anger, stamping his booted muddy feet, brandishing the guitar. The old man takes a step back, looking more disgusted than surprised or fearful. He must have heard that madmen roam the streets, but may have been counting on never meeting one. He takes another step backward. The short youth clubs him to the sidewalk with his guitar. A flurry of blows with the guitar fall upon the victim's head and chest and legs. The old man groans, twitches once or twice, and lies still. The short youth goes on prodding and mauling the unresisting body, a nasal song on his lips.

Watching from a doorway down the street, Jekyll felt that song on his lips, too. "What did it matter?" said the voice. He who had seen so many people die, poor, discarded, and always mustered without stint both compassion and indignation, he who had also saved so many lives, patched innumerable bodies and restored them to health, might be pardoned for watching once, just once, without pity, without intervening—not confined to the better part of feelings—as if it were a dream. Who was breaking that old man's bones? If that was Hyde, then he must be stopped.

Jekyll seeks the energy to live out his own acts. Inwardly, he begins composing the new will that he would dictate to Lanyon tomorrow morning. Hyde's aid seems ghostly now. Jekyll realizes that he is alone in a world of monsters, that the struggle between the good magicians and the bad ones is a distraction, if not an illusion. He must go after their chieftan, the master magician, the one beyond good and bad, who had confused and tempted him. Let Utterson send him all his energy, by whatever conduits are open. This time, he won't give it back.

While Utterson is rolling around in his bed in Oyster Bay, watching Poole scrub the carpet, and Hyde is squatting down by the bike again in Plattsburg, Jekyll, also in Plattsburg, is getting his arms into his coat. Hyde looks up again. "Wait!" he howls. "I've changed my mind."

Jekyll, who is concentrating on certain sensations he may or may not be having in his chest, thinking about the blue light that may or may not be emanating from Utterson at this very moment, feels a stab of alarm. "What?'

"Maybe you were right. That stuff you said last night." There is a strange, repulsive insinuation in Hyde's voice. "About going back to the city."

"What about your mother?" Jekyll is desperate.

"Let her croak," Hyde shouts jubilantly. "I'm coming with you!"

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Haunches against his heels, he starts dancing around the bike Cossack-fashion, kicking one scrawny leg after another, his left arm high above his head, banging a tom-tom on the fenders with the hammer in his right hand. "I just have to fix this"—Hyde gives the rear fender a terrific smash with the hammer, making a big dent—"then I'll get my other jeans and a sweater from upstairs. . . ."

"Don't come!" Jekyll bellows.

"Listen, buddy," Hyde snarls, picking up a huge pair of tongs. He yanks out the front wheel spokes one by one. "I can take a train if I want to. It's a free country."

Jekyll snatches the black cape off the hook, runs at Hyde, throws the cape over him, and seizes the bicycle chain lying on the floor. Hyde is struggling like a hen as Jekyll hits him once, twice, three times—trying, unsuccessfully as it turns out, to kill him with it—while, at the same moment, Utterson is picking up the phone with the long cord in his bedroom in Oyster Bay to dial the police.

Utterson stands at the blackboard in the Study House. Jekyll sits on the edge of his cot in a dank cell. He's already spent two months in solitary. Jekyll is in solitary, not because his crime, attempted murder, is so serious, but because one week after being put in jail he participated in a prisoner's strike for better food: the strike turned into a riot, and two guard hostages had their throats cut. Jekyll, conceding that it was his duty to make common cause with the mostly black and Puerto Rican prisoners, so much less fortunate than he, finds himself punished more severely than anyone. He is maltreated by the guards, and suspected by his fellow-prisoners who had elected him their spokesman in the parleys with the negotiator from Albany, of having been too intransigent, thereby making it easier for the Governor to order the National Guard to storm the west wing, during which assault thirteen prisoners were shot down, including all the principal leaders of the riot except Jekyll.

It's very cold, the coldest January in years. Jekyll thinks it is still December. Anyway, December or January, no let-up in the unremitting freezing spell is predicted. Technically, the prison can claim to be heated; regular deliveries of coke are made, and the coke shovelled into furnaces. But the heat doesn't filter down to Jekyll or to any of the other cells on the floor where prisoners in solitary are lodged. He minds most that his nose is always cold. Also his feet. The prisoners are issued slippers when they arrive at the prison—real leather, Jekyll noted with surprise, though cracked, worn, and a size too big. But they aren't allowed to wear socks. Jekyll, who was once a physical fitness buff and who now weighs one hundred and forty pounds, is extremely weak. If Utterson moves around too much on the platform, Jekyll will topple over.

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What Utterson is saying to a class of eager young disciples in the Study House in this: "Remember our lost brothers and sisters." Jekyll, who thinks that today is December 14th, remembers that last Sunday was his wife's birthday.

Richard Enfield, his wife's cousin, is visiting Jekyll, who has now been moved out of solitary to the east wing where prisoners are housed in pairs. Jekyll, whose right foot is in a cast because of an accident he had yesterday jumping down from the upper bunk, has permission to receive visitors today in his cell, instead of the normal place, the long rectangular visitor's room divided by a floor-to-ceiling grille. "That was a pretty dumb thing you tried to do there," says Enfield, trying to be casual. At first Jekyll thinks he is referring to the stupid way he wrenched his Achilles tendon and broke a bone in his heel, then realizes Enfield means the attempted murder of Hyde. But he isn't offended. He has already had a loving visit, early this afternoon, from his wife, who brought him a box of chocolates and a roast chicken in aspic. He has had to share the chocolates with his cell-mate, a heroin merchant who cut a guard's throat during the riot, but luckily the man turned up his nose at the chicken and Jekyll got to devour it by himself. Jekyll has already put on a little weight (he is up to one-fifty) and the cell is reasonably heated, but Enfield thinks he looks terrible.

Jekyll imagines he is handcuffed and that a chain runs from his wrist to the doorknob of Utterson's bedroom. If he jerks his hands, he could open Utterson's door—being careful not to bang Poole, the sleeping fourteen-year-old acolyte, on the head as the door flies open—and actually see what obscene acts take place in that room in the middle of the night.

"Anything I can bring you?" Enfield asks.

"Sure," says Jekyll. "You can bring me the news of someone's death."

Enfield turns away in pity and disgust, and asks the guard to open the cell door. "Mind how you close the door," Jekyll shouts. "Softly! There's a draft." His cell-mate, now exiled to the upper bunk, presses his chocolate-stained mouth into his pillow and grunts unpleasantly. Utterson, taking his afternoon nap, rolls around in his large filthy bed, and shouts for Poole to bring him some fresh coffee. It is time for him to get up and rejoin his pupils in the Study House, to deliver another talk on inner discipline and the proper uses of selfishness. Jekyll watches the door slam shut.

Finally, it is frail old Lanyon who brings Jekyll the news he is waiting for. Hyde has committed suicide: hanged himself in his cellar.

Since it is two weeks later, Jekyll should have been able to receive Lanyon in the visitor's room; but this morning he tripped on his crutches while hobbling from his bunk to the slop pail and cleanly fractured a bone in his left ankle. The

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prison doctor has just left; the new cast, a pinkish color, is still damp.

"Speaking as your lawyer, I don't know whether this affects your chances for parole or not."

My feet, thinks Jekyll. No, not my feet.

Lanyon is still talking. "Attempted murder is still attempted murder, even if the intended victim dies for whatever reason shortly after."

"Did he leave me a note?" Jekyll demands in a husky voice.

Lanyon hands Jekyll a small white envelope. Jekyll tears it open. Inside is a sheet of ruled paper from a school notebook, on which is the imprint in lipstick of a large mouth. Lanyon tries to look over Jekyll's shoulder, but Jekyll is too quick and crumples the paper before the lawyer can see, stuffing it into the top of his right cast.

"What does he say? It could be useful in the file I'm submitting to the parole board."

Jekyll shakes his head. "Did he leave any other messages?" he says coldly.

"For Utterson."

"What did it say?"

"He admits it was he who made that unsuccessful attempt to burn down the Institute on October 16th."

"Poor pretentious bastard," says Jekyll, hiding his disappointment.

"Shut up! I'm trying to sleep!" grumbles the successful murderer in the upper bunk.

During a moment's silence, Jekyll looks down at his handsome, large, somewhat bony hands. "And what did Utterson say to that?"

"You know Utterson." Lanyon laughs, with his discordant, old man's laugh. "He says it would have been fine with him if Hyde had succeeded. He says that everybody is free to do as he or she likes."

"Oh, freedom. . . ." Jekyll munches on some vanilla fudge his wife had brought him that morning. His body feels both dense and light. Leaning back comfortably in his bunk, he settles his feet, both encased to mid-calf in plaster, one dry and the other still wet, on the extra pillow he's been given, and smiles. "Don't speak to me about freedom."

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Paul Zweig

THE RAW AND THE COOKED

I

It has seemed at times as if the poetry of the 1960s spoke one language: simple, sensitive to conversational rhythms, and deliberately "unliterary." In order to be believed, it was felt, a poem had to create a feeling of honest talk. Indeed, a rhetoric of "honesty" developed, the main features of which were a slight clumsiness, the avoidance of culturally charged words in favor of common speech, and a rhythm of understatement, as if the poem's "honesty" required that it avoid a sense of authority. The poem was supposed to have "happened." It was not an artifact of words, but an outgrowth of the poet's integrity. The reader was meant to be surprised by leaps of insight emerging simply and vulnerably, as if a man were saying more than he thought he knew. This rhetoric of honesty exerted an enormous attraction on poets of the most varied gifts. The feeling seemed to be that language had to be held in check if it were not to lie; that language, the poet's only tool, was fundamentally untrustworthy. He had, therefore, to use it minimally. He had to write as if it were not language at all, but a pure transmission of intimacy, like Rousseau's language of hearts.

Along with this attitude toward language went a distrust of the sort of conceptual ambition which characterized the poetry of a preceding generation. Poets of the 1960s did not trust the reflective power of a Stevens or an Eliot. They chose humbler models, for example, Chinese poetry, with its mood of domestic mystery and unsophisticated emotions. This surely is an irony of cultural influence, since Chinese poetry is in fact highly conventional. The casual "honesty" of Tu Fu or Li Po is the result of a codified rhetoric, and not at all a "language of the heart." But, as Harold Bloom has argued, such misreadings are of the very nature of cultural influence.

A sustaining irony of this plain style, perhaps a source of the energy it released for so many poets, is political, though covertly and probably unconsciously so. The refusal of rhetorical authority, the humble rhythms of intimacy, the focus on fleeting moments and small perceptions, represents, perhaps, a distrust of power itself which was expressed in many other ways in the culture of the 1960s. As the nation had come to value control over the material world and coercive authority, enforced by the machines of war, its poets relinquished the material world and the language of power; they relinquished

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the public and historical realms, and retreated into the freedom of "inwardness." This relinquishment became a political act, issuing eventually into the political poetry of the late 1960s.

As with any language which settles into a code and a set of conventions, the conversational style of the 1960s has gradually discovered its limits. All too often "honesty" has become a formula, slack rhythms a vehicle for unfocused energy, smallness of perception a form of avoidance. The enormous release which many poets experienced in the early 1960s has been replaced by mannerisms of release.

This weakening of the language is apparent in William Stafford's new book, *Sometime Maybe.*[1] Stafford is one of the finest poets of the conversational style. His poems are limpid and controlled, with a sort of narrative plainness that recalls Robert Frost. Like Frost too, he writes out of an experience of America, in particular of the American Northwest, though rarely with the insistent localism which characterized other poets of the 1960s, who loaded their poems with folk history and picturesque place-names. For Stafford the American landscape is the embodiment of a way of seeing. It supplies a solitary vastness crossed by languages which reach from one blind place to another; not only human languages, confined to the long loops of telephone wire which appear so often in Stafford's poems, but natural languages spoken by snowflakes, by echoes, by tumbleweed. Stafford's "language of hearts" speaks across the distance which separates man from his own created objects, and from nature, as in this poem from *The Rescued Year:*

> *Some catastrophes are better than others.*
> *Wheat under the snow lived by blizzards*
> *that massacred stock on Uncle George's farm.*
> *Only telephone poles remember the place, and the wire*
> *thrills a mile at a time into that intent blast*
> *where the wind going by fascinated whole*
> *millions of flakes and thousands of acres of tumbleweeds.*

These connections come easily to Stafford. He perceives them with a child's immediacy, but a child who has grown older and learned to understand the irremediable quality of distance. When he is at his best, Stafford's plain style has some of the feeling of folk stories and myth: it does not need complexities of language in order to create its vision, because the vision belongs to the world the poet sees, and not to the poet himself.

These marvelous qualities are only sparsely present in *Sometime Maybe.* Instead, the simple language has become a mannerism. The transparent sense of myth or folktale has become a deliberate naïveté. There are too many lines in the book like these:

1. *Sometime Maybe.* By William Stafford. Harper & Row. $5.95.

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A person mixing colors bends low
when we walk there. "Why are you
so intent on that bottle you are stirring?"
And then I know: in that little bottle
he has the sky.

and

But many things in the world
haven't yet happened. You help
them by thinking and writing and acting.
Where they begin, you greet them
or stop them. You come along
and sustain the new things.

This sounds like the sort of idea an adult would mistakenly invent to amuse a child. But the child would miss the point, because the images do not have the innocence of something "seen" for the first time. Although they try for that quality, they come up instead with commonplace statements and coy sentimentality. Much of *Sometime Maybe* fails in the same way. Here is another example of what I mean:

One day Sun found a new canyon.
It hid for miles and ran far away,
then it went under a mountain. Now Sun
goes over but knows it is there. And that
is why Sun shines—it is always looking.
Be like the sun.

The attempted myth creates no echoes here. The strained simplicity of the poem chokes it off before it can gather resonance. One need only recall Stafford's extraordinary myth poem in *The Rescued Year,* "The Animal That Drank Up Sound," to see how powerfully this mode has worked for him in the past. But in *Sometime Maybe* the ideas fall limply on the page. One has the sense of a formula being offered, instead of a perception still damp with its birth-water.

But Stafford is too good a poet to be defined by his failures, even in a book as disappointing as *Sometime Maybe.* Here and there one comes upon poems which are as quietly startling as any Stafford has written. In the end, one feels that *Sometime Maybe* represents not so much a flagging of Stafford's powers as an editorial mistake, made all too easily because the convention of simple talk lay at hand, ready to speak on when the poet himself had fallen silent. Here is one of the wholly lovely poems in the book which must be added to the number of Stafford's finest; it is entitled, "The Widow Who Taught at an Army School":

She planted bullets in a window box,
lead tips up like a row of buds,
and she told the children: "Every charge

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the Indians made was a dance for their horses,
but serious men made the Gatling gun;
its bullets come true forever—you go
mad from shooting the gun.

"From east of the mountains, from Daylight Lake,
morning begins," she said,
"and it loves us all; its edge opens the field.
Children, let's sing 'Rescue Me, Day,'
for we are all prisoners here."

There are widows like that in many schools,
and officers with eyes like badges
that follow a look past the window box,
ready for a dance but mad from the gun,
and stare out over the field.

II

In recent years, there has been a casting about for heroes in American life. Perhaps the anxious confusion of the period has caused among us a particularly great longing to relax into admiration. We want to bask in the stability of a great talent. We want to experience the steady, warming influence of genius. Because it is exhausting to have to make up one's mind every day, we are thankful that certain results endure. Shakespeare and his companions in the heaven of literature offer us secure ecstasies.

But this is an unstable time in America. Great men are tossed high, and brought low too quickly. The empyrean of heroes no longer hovers at a lovely distance. Instead of Fred Astaire, Clark Gable, and Greta Garbo, we have Dustin Hoffman and Jane Fonda, who are good, who are very good, but who are vulnerable, close enough to our grey level of confusion to cause a hint of envy; a suspicion that the difference between us and them is not genius, but luck. So our heroes don't last. Nixon soars to the heights and is shot down in months. Norman Mailer is scarcely anointed, when he skids into ridicule. The heaven of heroes refuses our burnt offerings.

In this respect the little world of poetry has reflected the larger world. Almost yearly another banquet is set, another talent is seated at the place of honor, another offering of praise is elaborately prepared, with overtones of reverence and grim respect. But there are no sustained hosannas, no beatitude of settled values. The subtle acids of doubt topple the celebration, and a year or two later the hero has subsided into the unfinishable labor of becoming a poet —a labor which he himself has never discontinued. But now we leave him to it, buying his books perhaps, but exhausted once again by the need to make up our minds. Alan Dugan, Robert Bly, James Wright, John Ashbery, W. S. Merwin, Allen Ginsberg, all have received the pomp of celebration only to be returned to the world of unfinished men. Robert Lowell lasted longer. The praise still billows around his knotty countenance, but there is less of it, and, apparently, less of him. John Berryman had his hour, and a second effort may

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be gathering now that he is not here to undermine it with the elaborate cunning of his drunkenness and despair. Sylvia Plath has lasted remarkably long, despite her sentimental partisans.

Meanwhile the table has been set again, and the guests are swarming. Another good poet has been declared hopefully, tentatively, major. The poet is A. R. Ammons, the occasion the publication last year of his *Collected Poems*.[2] Ammons has written a great deal. Although his *Collected Poems* are not complete—it leaves out a long poem, "Tape For the Turn of the Year," published several years ago as a separate volume—it represents almost four hundred pages, and Ammons's career is young.

Collection is the opposite of selection and, in the case of poetry, it is rarely to the poet's advantage. Few of us are Yeats or Baudelaire. In the past, most collections were done after the poet's death by scholars seeking to establish a historical document. But poets these days have taken to "collecting" themselves, and the result often blurs more than it clarifies the achievement of the work. In his collection, Ammons includes every moment and modulation of his talent: the luminous leafed in with the trivial, the carefully achieved with the self-indulgent, the too long with the too short. One has to wade through a great deal of tentative language before coming upon the fine sparse poems which represent Ammons's best. But the labor is by no means all loss. The very shagginess and roughness of the collection forces the reader to become intimate with Ammons's elusive rhythms. One has the experience not so much of reading a work, as of entering into a process, in the course of which finished poems emerge, like pure crystals, their stony husk refined away. There is power in all of this. The roughness and profusion of Ammons's work becomes, somehow, a figure for his obsession; the sense of a process rushing brilliantly, though inconclusively forward is, finally, true to the idea of his poetry. As a result of sifting and panning all of this ore—a labor not without tedium—one understands, finally, why Ammons's turn at the banquet table has come.

At a time when the limits of the conversational style have come to be felt more and more strongly, Ammons offers, in great abundance, precisely those qualities neglected during the 1960s: intricate language and conceptual ambition. Reading through many of his longer poems, one is impressed by Ammons's attempt to connect a density of style reminiscent of Gerard Manley Hopkins, with an elaborate reflective framework which recalls Wallace Stevens. The echo of Stevens is inevitable, since Ammons's main concern is to articulate a philosophy of perception which must be simultaneously argued and demonstrated in the poetry. The main point of Ammons's conception seems to be his view that the mind and the world are joined together in a seamless intricacy. It is not simply that the mind and the world mirror each other, for mirrors contain settled forms, they connect but they also interpose limits. Like Alice, the poet has solved the surface of the mirror. He perceives,

2. *Collected Poems 1951-1971*. By A. R. Ammons. Norton. $12.50.

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and renders in language, the interpenetrating gusts of movement by which the mind and the world make each other whole. As Ammons writes in "Corsons Inlet":

> *I have reached no conclusions, have erected no boundaries,*
> *shutting out and shutting in, separating inside*
> *from outside: I have*
> *drawn no lines:*
> *as*
>
> *manifold events of sand*
> *change the dune's shape that will not be the same shape*
> *tomorrow,*
>
> *so I am willing to go along, to accept*
> *the becoming*
> *thought, to stake off no beginnings or ends, establish*
> *no walls:*

This is Ammons at his clearest, yet somehow not at his best. The statement he makes is accurate enough: the aim of his poetry is not finishing, but unfinishing; it is to cut the world loose from the illusion of settled forms, and set it flowing in the ever new flood of perception. His words cascade irregularly on the page in a mimetism of released energy. The "idea" is there all right. But the poetry is cold, the experience, for all its intricacy, is thin. And here is Ammons's gravest fault. All too often he fails to connect the conceptual framework of the poem with the local effects of his language. This is especially true in the early work, but it remains true of his longer, more ambitious poems throughout. His images turn moments of experience into sensuous complexities; Hopkins-like compressions of syntax offer the reader "a hundred sensations a second," as Ammons remarks. But a gap yawns between this brilliant seething of impressions and the overarching discourse which Ammons intends as his "idea of order." Between sensuous mimetism and cold philosophy there is a space, which Ammons does not fill often enough. But the space between is where we live. It is where the "idea" thickens into passion, where passions clarify into thought and perception. "Corsons Inlet" and "Saliences" are often cited as examples of Ammons's conceptual power. We are invited by critics to think of Wordsworth in "Tintern Abbey," of Emerson, of Eliot's discoursive passages in "Four Quartets." But "Corsons Inlet" is governed by windy and abstract rhetoric, as in the passage quoted above. The poem begins crisply enough, with a description of the poet walking along a beachfront, exploring the uncertain margin between land and sea, reflecting on the perpetual movement which dissolves shapes through an alchemy of slow transitions, as the sand dune simultaneously stands and and blows away, as the tide is a tireless alternation of land and water. But the landscape is quickly dimmed by the fog of meaning which Ammons projects upon it. Ammons's power of perception, his most

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brilliant quality, lapses into a compromise which is neither sensuous, nor especially thoughtful either:

> *in nature there are few sharp lines: there are areas of*
> *primrose*
> *more or less dispersed;*
> *disorderly orders of bayberry; between the rows*
> *of dunes,*
> *irregular swamps of reeds,*
> *though not reeds alone, but grass, bayberry, yarrow, all . . .*
> *predominantly reeds:*

Academic critics like Harold Bloom and Geoffrey Hartman have been partly responsible for the enlarged interest in Ammons's work. *Diacritics,* a university magazine devoted to literary theory, recently published an entire issue on Ammons. One is happy for this renewed interest on the part of the academy for poets and for poetry. Bloom's and Hartman's enthusiasm for Ammons probably reflects their sense of a failure in the antirhetorical poetry of the past decade. After years of a poetic style which militated against ideas and repudiated conceptual ambition, they found in Ammons a poet both thoughtful and complex, whose work invites the sort of critical scrutiny which the great works of modernism also invited. Like Stevens, Pound, and Eliot, Ammons in his poetry demands explication. And let us be reminded, explication is not simply a form of detached analysis. It is a mode of reading required by, and appropriate to, complex poems. As practiced by the great critics of modernism—Blackmur, Empson—it becomes a form of intellectual ascesis, mobilizing the passions of thought in an activity akin to the methods of meditation about which Louis Martz has written.

But these critics have done Ammons a curious disservice, for they have focused their praise on his weakest quality—his attempt to formulate complicated ideas in poetry—and overlooked what seems to me to be his real achievement: the lyrical articulation of small moments of experience; his ability to organize shapes of language into an epiphany of movement, a frozen flood of perceptions which is visionary not because of any passionate metaphysics, but because of the sheer clarity of the poet's ability to recreate what he "sees." I don't mean to say that Ammons doesn't think well, or that his ideas are not interesting. They are; more important, they provide a framework which releases the intensity of his best short poems. But they do not make good poetry. Unlike Eliot or Stevens, Ammons does not write well about ideas. His conceptual reach does not intensify his language. When he writes "philosophical" poems, or inserts reflective passages into poems, he becomes boring and abstract. Only when his poem plunges into the moment itself does it gain the exhilarating clarity which is Ammons's best quality, as in this short poem, "Winter Scene":

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There is now not a single
leaf on the cherry tree:

except when the jay
plummets in, lights, and,

in pure clarity, squalls:
then every branch

quivers and
breaks out in blue leaves.

The shock of hard, swift vision here is powerful and lovely. It recalls the sort of naked language which William Carlos Williams made possible in American poetry. There are many poems like this in the *Collected Poems.* One comes upon them as upon wells of clear drink in a complicated landscape. The seamless intricacy of world and mind is not a subject matter of the poem, but a medium into which the poet has been launched. In poems like these, the scaffolding has been forgotten; the poet is naked in the world, and the world has become naked to him. He is thinking with his "eyes" not his mind, or rather, his mind has let itself loose into the fusing brilliance of perception.

In another mode more special to his vision, Ammons has written poems which are intricate mimetisms of change, expressing his sense of the unceasing movement which is all we can know of experience, and of the world. Such poems succeed when they grasp the form of movement in a kind of visual onomatopoeia, instead of offering conclusions about a metaphysics of change. Given Ammons's obsession with instability and process, it is no surprise that he should have trouble with conclusions, both in the philosophical and in the formal sense. It is only in mid-movement, like a sudden vision of all the drops in a column of falling water, that his poetry attains a sort of cold ecstasy. There is fascinating strength in a passage like this

From silence to silence:
as a woods stream
over a
rock holding on

breaks into clusters of sound
multiple and declaring as
leaves, each one,

filling
the continuum between leaves,

but a typical letdown in the poem's concluding lines:

I stand up,
fracturing the equilibrium,
hold on,

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my disturbing, skinny speech
declaring
the cosmos.

Elsewhere the processes of thought and feeling themselves are made into cataracts of imagery. The inner world becomes not a space, as in much poetry of the 1960s, but a sinuous energy, as in "Landscape With Figures":

When I go back of my head
down the cervical well, roots
branch
thinning, figuring
into flesh
and flesh
glimmers with man-old fires
and ghosts
hollowing up into mind
cry from ancient narrowing
needle-like caves:

A. R. Ammons is an excellent poet. His *Collected Poems* resembles a flood of scraps and pieces mingled with finely wrought objects. The power of the flood is blurred but it is governed by a vision which imposes itself and, gradually convinces, not as an argument, which Ammons manages with only moderate skill, but as a lived clarity; and that, finally, is much more rare and precious.

Clearly, a poet refuses the dominant language of his time at his peril. Often those poets who succeed create a new language, as Allen Ginsberg did when he wrote *Howl* amid the overpolished tones of the 1950s. At first glance Ammons too seems to be a maverick, working vigorously against the limitations of the plain style, making a case in his work for a new intricacy of conception. Yet his best poems are closer to the plain style than one might think. It is when one hears William Carlos Williams in the background of his voice that the poems work clearly and solidly, not when one hears Hopkins or Stevens. Like so many other poets of the 1960s, Ammons's strengths and limitations derive from his flight into immediacy, his unwillingness to work with or against the limiting framework of culture and tradition. In this sense, of course, Ammons is extraordinarily American. But the impulse to reinvent all language, and all thought, falls short in his work. What survives is Ammons's version of the dream which is at the heart of so much recent poetry: the anticultural, Rousseauean dream of a purer, more articulate nature.

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BOOKS

RATS, MEN, AND HISTORY

ABOUT BEHAVIORISM. By B. F. Skinner. Alfred A. Knopf. $6.95.

For well over a generation—from around 1930 to the mid-1960s—psychological research and teaching in America were dominated by Behaviorism. Its dogmatic dicta, promulgated by such academic high priests as John B. Watson, Clark L. Hull and B. F. Skinner, and enforced by an informal sanhedrin of department heads and senior professors, determined what psychologists were allowed to study and how they could study it at dozens of American colleges and universities.

Today the Behaviorist establishment, though it still controls important intellectual power centers such as the American Psychological Association, has increasingly been forced on the defensive; the present volume is a case in point. In it, Skinner, the leading spokesman for the school, seeks to reply to his many critics in and out of the profession. His book will in fact supply them with more ammunition. In its disregard for scientific method and even simple logic, its presentation of platitude and tautology as meaningful scientific statement, and in its extraordinary—perhaps willful—ignorance of basic facts about both human nature and science, it typifies Behaviorism at its worst. The book's publication, moreover, raises some important questions of public policy which I shall discuss later.

As most people know, Skinner has reduced psychology, animal and human alike, to the study of "reinforcement." His fundamental rule is that the actions an animal performs depend entirely on whether those actions, or similar ones, have in the past been followed by particular kinds of consequences, either "positive" or "negative" ("aversive"). If positive, the action is more likely to recur; if negative, less likely. This is the central dogma of Skinnerian Behaviorism, and it is (a) tautologous and (b) untrue.

The tautology is most easily perceived by enquiring *why* some consequences are positive and others, negative. Most of us would say, because the

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former are in some sense pleasant or satisfying, while the latter are unpleasant or painful. Skinner, however, rejects such "mentalistic" notions. Thus, he declares, to say that the human animal "is powerfully reinforced by sugar, salt and sexual contact is very different from saying that these things reinforce *because* they taste or feel good." But if the subjective aspect of reinforcing consequences is, as Skinner claims, "incidental," then what—"objectively"—*is* reinforcement? Elsewhere, Skinner has defined it as any "contingency" that makes the action it follows more (or less) likely to recur. Substituting this definition, his Law of Reinforcement then reads: An action is more likely to recur if it is followed by any consequence that makes it more likely to recur. A rose is a rose is a rose.

The same essential tautology crops up in different forms throughout the book. Thus "When in recalling a name we find a wrong name too powerful it is . . . *because* it is repeatedly emitted to the exclusion of the name we are recalling." Which translates as: "We find the wrong name too powerful because it is more powerful than the name we are recalling."

Insofar as Skinner's reinforcement theory is meaningful at all, it is at best a half truth, in that an animal's actions can be shown to be determined, not merely by their consequences, but by other, non-reinforcing events *preceding* them. If a monkey watches another monkey solve—or fail to solve—a problem, the probability that it will itself be able to solve the problem increases; similar "observation learning" has been demonstrated in, e.g., cats. And anyone who has ever dealt with children knows that they tend to imitate adults and their fellows; in Behaviorist terms, if a child observes an action being performed, that in itself increases the probability that it will perform the action. Yet in none of these cases has the child or animal been "reinforced"—because it has not yet done anything that *can* be reinforced. But to concede the existence—let alone the probable evolutionary importance—of observation learning would inevitably open the door to such "mentalistic" concepts as information storage in the brain, which Skinner explicitly rejects—so he simply ignores the subject.

Skinner's propensity for dodging thorny psychological problems shows up most clearly in his brief references to creativity. This phenomenon —obviously central to an understanding, not merely of art and science but to such universal human activities as the acquisition and use of language—is brushed off in less than two pages, by likening it to a biological mutation. Which of course explains nothing whatever. The closely allied phenomenon of "insight learning," in which an animal *suddenly* performs a complex action or series of actions it has never done or seen before, is not even mentioned —though it was described by Köhler as early as 1917 and more rigorously defined and studied by, e.g., the late Herbert Birch more than 10 years ago.

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What Skinner cannot ignore, he misstates. Thus he defines "empathy" as "the attribution of feelings to others," though any dictionary would have told him otherwise. The false definition enables him to duck the problem of explaining how men, as we all know, can *share* the emotions of others. The topic of imagination—not even listed in the index—is disposed of by such dicta as "to see a person in one's imagination simply means behaving as we behaved in his presence upon some earlier occasion." This is, of course, nonsense; a person who habitually behaves toward imagined individuals as he did toward them in the flesh is generally deemed to be mentally deranged.

The book is replete with logical fallacies. The non-sequitur: "Gambling can be demonstrated in many other species, and is explained by a special schedule of reinforcement"—ergo, the same type of reinforcement "explains" gambling in man. The false analogy: "A completely independent science of subjective experience would have no more bearing on a science of behavior than a science of what people feel about fire would have on the science of combustion"—which ignores the rather essential difference that in one case the same person is both feeling and behaving, while in the other the feeling person is not—as a rule—the burning one. And, not least, flat self-contradiction: Thinking is "completed behavior which occurs on a scale so small that it cannot be detected by others." Yet only a paragraph later we are told that such "covert" behavior is "easily observed."

Skinner's attempt to defend the indefensible leads him into blatant misstatements of fact. Thus in denying the existence of the mind, he declares that "we cannot change a person's behavior by changing his mind or his brain." But of course we can do precisely that through, e.g., drugs or brain surgery; Lashley wrote extensively on the latter topic nearly 50 years ago. Would anyone care to bet that Skinner's own behavior would not be radically changed if he ingested a pint of whiskey in half an hour?

In another attempt to downgrade the significance of thinking, Skinner alleges that "an algebraic equation is solved by finding the value of X," when most college freshmen are aware that the value of X is obtained by solving the equation. Indeed it is perfectly possible to find the value of X—e.g., in the back of the book—without solving the equation at all.

To the charge that Behaviorism is simplistic, Skinner declares that "We no longer find it hard to believe that a bacterium or a virus can explain the devastation of a plague." Personally, I find it not merely hard but impossible to believe. Skinner's attempt to explain an epidemic simplistically in terms merely of microbes, ignoring such key factors as sanitation, nutrition and the presence of animal vectors that may transmit the microbes, merely demonstrates his ignorance of medical science.

Skinner's ultimate argument for Behaviorism is the success of the "technology" it has begotten—the technique of psychiatric manipulation known as

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behavior modification. Now there is very little doubt—in my mind, at least—that behavior modification works, on some patients, some of the time. But its empirical success in no sense validates Behaviorism. If Skinner knew anything about the history of technology, he would be aware that the efficacy of any technology says nothing about the validity of its conceptual rationale. Aspirin has been a useful drug for nearly a century, yet only in the past few years have physiologists discovered why it works—and dozens of comparable examples could be cited from the history of pharmacology. To take a more homely case, man has demonstrably been employing the technology of fire for more than half a million years. His *explanations* of fire, however, remained erroneous if not outright fantastic until less than two centuries ago.

As a reply to Behaviorism's critics, in short, *About Behaviorism* is laughable. Most of the time, indeed, the reply is as oblique as possible; Skinner almost never names his critics or quotes them directly, leading to the suspicion that many of them are in fact straw men, whose demolition will hopefully obscure the fact that really substantial criticisms are merely obfuscated, when they are not simply ignored. The work is precisely what Professor Joseph Weitzenbaum of MIT called it in the *New York Times:* an "awful book," replete with "utterly vacuous theories." Which raises the question of why the book's preparation—like that of its awful predecessor, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*—was supported by a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health.

One wonders, to begin with, whether, having subsidized Skinner's reply to his critics, NIMH will give the latter equal time. But quite apart from this, is the support of philosophical polemics—by Skinner or anyone else—a proper use of public funds? Some academic friends of mine say that it is, but I am not convinced. If someone wants to do research, or propose future research, then by all means let NIMH subsidize him (or her)—always assuming, of course, that the person in question lacks adequate personal or institutional funds to do the job. But if someone feels inclined to philosophize about human nature—which is what Skinner concedes he is doing—my feeling, as a taxpayer, is that he should do it on his own time, not mine.

But quite apart from the propriety of subsidizing works of this character—why Skinner? The man holds an endowed professorship at Harvard, whose not inconsiderable salary is supplemented by royalties and lecture fees; it seems reasonable to think that he could and would have written both books without a nickel of public money. Meanwhile—as many medical acquaintances of mine are bitterly complaining—a great deal of potentially valuable research is having to be discontinued because money isn't available.

But perhaps the most fundamental question raised by Skinner's NIMH subsidy is that of quality control. *About Behaviorism,* like its predecessor, is junk—not because of the author's opinions, but because of the shoddy, unsci-

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entific way in which he justifies those opinions. And if his arguments are intellectually contemptible, the scholarly apparatus with which he supports them is beneath contempt. His "bibliography" consists purely and simply of his own *opera omnia;* if anyone else has written anything important about Behaviorism, we are not to know it. His source notes average less than one per 13 pages of text; of the innumerable theories on human nature that he attacks, we are given virtually no clues as to who projected them, and when, and in what terms. Had *About Behaviorism* been offered as an *M.A.* thesis at any first-rate university, it would—or at any rate should—have been rejected with contumely.

In short, given the abysmal quality of what it has paid for, NIMH would be fully entitled to ask for its money back. As a taxpayer, I strongly urge that it do so.

Robert Claiborne

A LETTER IN A BOTTLE

Selected Poems By Joseph Brodsky. Translated and with an Introduction by George Kline. Foreward by W. H. Auden. Harper & Row. $5.95.

It has been evident for some time that Joseph Brodsky is by far the most significant Russian poet of his generation. At the launching of his now rapidly fading career, Evgeny Evtushenko had freshness, *panache* and a measure of civic courage. Yet even at his peak, he was at best a second-rate poet and a facile if occasionally effective rhetorician. Andrey Voznesensky's engaging verve and exuberant involvement with his medium earned him plaudits in the West which in retrospect may seem somewhat excessive: seen at close range, Voznesensky's "modernism" appears derivative and a trifle gimmicky.

Brodsky is quite a different matter. He has had his lapses and false starts. Some of his lines are strained or murky, but his best work has originality, incisiveness, depth and formal mastery which mark a major poet.

In his helpful introduction George Kline observes: "Brodsky's is a private, . . . not a public, muse." W. H. Auden is "inclined to classify Mr. Brodsky as a traditionalist." Both points are well taken. Brodsky's recurrent themes are lyric poets' traditional, indeed timeless concerns—man and na-

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ture, love and death, the ineluctability of anguish, the fragility of human achievements and attachments, the preciousness of the privileged moment, the "unrepeatable." The tenor of this poetry is not so much apolitical as antipolitical, which in a bleakly politicized society was bound to be construed as an act of defiance. Brodsky's besetting sin was not "dissent" in the proper sense of the word, but a total, and on the whole quietly undemonstrative, estrangement from the Soviet ethos. The only explicit reference in *Selected Poems* to the official shibboleths is the almost casually polemical "farewell" to Karl Marx. ("A Letter in a Bottle," 1965):

> *Adieu to the prophet who said: Forsooth.*
> *You have nothing to lose but your chains. In truth*
> *There is conscience as well: . . . if it comes to that . . .*

When Brodsky pauses meditatively and seeks to locate himself and his generation in the stream of history, his terms of reference prove singularly "untimely." One of his best known poems "A Halt in the Desert" (1966) is built around the clash between traditional faith as represented by the dismantled Greek Orthodox Church in Leningrad, and soulless modernity epitomized by the bleak and unwieldy new concert hall built in its place. As the speaker contemplates, rather unhappily, this transition, he inquires:

> *. . . from which are we*
> *now more remote: the world of ancient Greece*
> *or [Russian] Orthodoxy? Which is closer now?*
> *What lies ahead? Does a new epoch wait*
> *for us? and if it does, what duty do we owe?*
> *What sacrifices must we make for it?*

The consequences of this idiosyncratic stance are part of the record. Even though by the mid-sixties Brodsky was viewed by some of the best Leningrad critics and poets, including Anna Akhmatova, as a budding master, he remained until his abrupt departure from Russia a literary "unperson": only four of his poems have been published in the Soviet Union. Moreover, in February 1964 he was arraigned on charges of "social parasitism" and sentenced to five years' hard labor in the Arkhangelsk region of the Soviet far north. (He was actually allowed to return to Leningrad after twenty months in exile.) Though some of the most effective poems in this volume were written during that harrowing period, the author's personal ordeal receives a remarkably reticent, indeed, an almost oblique treatment:

> *. . . a fate which doesn't ask for blood*
> *but wounds me with a blunted needle . . .*

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That I whose soberness of style was classic
would balance on the thin edge of a knife.

I have voyaged with honor my course: due North.

Only once in a sardonic "To a Certain Poetess" does a statement of the speaker's plight become curtly explicit. "So let us call it quits: I've lost my freedom."

Clearly, Brodsky's muse is short on self-pity. Interestingly enough, the theme of ostracism as the poet's essential condition—a motif wider and more pervasive than that of the short-term rigors of the Arkhangelsk exile—is sounded in a poem written *prior* to Brodsky's exile:

You are coming home again. What does it mean?
Can there be anyone here who still needs you?
Who still wants to count you as his friend? . . .
. . .
It's fine to walk alone in this vast world
Toward home from the tumultuous railroad station.

Is this a prefiguration of the speaker's impending plight or is it rather an evocation of a predicament of which Brodsky's actual travail in 1964-5 was merely, in the phrase of one of his favorite poets, an appropriately grim "objective correlative"?

Actually, in Brodsky's view, the real issue is still larger. The situation of the independent-minded poet in the Soviet Union appears here as an extreme variant of the creative individual's status in *any* society; presumably the social rewards of poetic vision range from harassment to indifference. "A writer," Brodsky wrote in a revealing statement, "is a lonely traveler, and no one is his helper" *(New York Times Magazine,* October 1, 1972).

Born into a culture which had reduced the millennial élan of radical Russian intelligentsia to a bleakly authoritarian dogma, Brodsky has an instinctive loathing of utopian thinking and scant enthusiasm for the more moderate modes of political meliorism. (In his *New Statesmen* review of *Selected Poems* Stephen Spender said with a fine touch of liberal self-irony: "Everything you would like him to think he does not think.") "Today's humanity's choice," he maintained in the already quoted *New York Times* article, "lies not between Good and Evil but between Bad and Worse." Hence the high premium placed here on "personal fortitude," on being able to face unblinkingly the essential untractability of human experience, the finality of loss and separation:

Our farewell's the more final
since we both are aware

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that we'll not meet in Heaven
or be neighbors in Hell.

Clearly, what is proposed here is stoicism rather than secularism. Brodsky's hankering after a religious sense of the world is quite apparent. Yet religion toward which he reaches is not a source of comfort, of easy solace, but a mode of transcendence. Nor is Brodsky's vaunted "metaphysical" thrust a matter of downgrading, let alone escaping, the merely physical. He shares with many post-Symbolist poets the delight in the concrete and the immediate, in what J. C. Ransom has called "the world's body." Wary as he is of man as a social animal, he places more trust in "things" ("Things are more pleasant"), in the sensory detail affectionately repossessed and recreated by the artist:

It seems that art strives for us to be
precise and not to tell us lies because
its fundamental law undoubtedly
asserts the independence of detail . . .

(One is reminded of the early Pasternak's celebration of the "Omnipotent god of detail, the omnipotent god of love"). One of the highpoints of Brodsky's early period, the remarkable "Elegy for John Donne" (1962) characteristically is in large part a cumulative evocation of the material underpinnings of Donne's universe from his immediate physical environment ("walls, bed and floor . . . the pictures, carpet, hooks and bolts") to "this island . . . embraced by lonely dreams." The organic bond between imagination and actuality, the interpenetration of poetry and nature is one of the themes in the finely wrought and richly orchestrated tribute to another English master, "Verses on the Death of T. S. Eliot" (1965). In its intricate metrical structure Brodsky's poem is patterned after W. H. Auden's classic "In Memory of W. B. Yeats (d. January 1939)." It is remarkable that such a full-throated homage to Eliot's achievement should have come from a proscribed Russian poet, stranded in the snows of Arkhangelsk.

Wood and field will not forget
All that lives will know you yet
As the body holds in mind
Lost caress of lips and arms . . .

It should be apparent by now that Brodsky's mode of concreteness is more akin to Wallace Stevens's than to William Carlos Williams's. Brodsky shares with the former an active concern with the complex relationship between language and reality, between words and things, and more broadly, a pronounced intellectual, though never merely cerebral, bent. In many of his

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longer poems high seriousness tends to alternate or blend with qualities which bespeak intellectual playfulness or wit—the bilingual facetiousness of "Two Hours in an Empty Tank," the wry irony of "To a Certain Poetess" and "A Letter in a Bottle," the epigrammatic terseness of such lines as "No loneliness is deeper than the memory of miracles," "Most seers are cripples," "Life is but talk hurled in the face of silence."

The latter phrase occurs in what is to date Brodsky's most ambitious and longest poem, "Gorbunov and Gorchakov," written between 1965 and 1968 and couched largely in the form of a dialogue between two patients in a mental hospital. (Brodsky himself had a brief exposure to the political uses of Soviet psychiatry.) To sustain throughout both the dialogue form and an elaborate metrical pattern was a tall order. Yet in spite of occasional lapses "Gorbunov and Gorchakov" is an impressive achievement and the remarkable discursive sequence, "A Conversation on the Porch" from which the above quotation is drawn a poetic and intellectual *tour de force.*

Some three years ago Joseph Brodsky, in his own words, "accepted the invitation" to leave Russia, offered, we will recall, in a rather peremptory fashion. Shortly after his arrival in the United States, he voiced some concern over enforced separation from his native linguistic environment only to conclude on a more optimistic note: "I hope that I will take the Russian language wherever I go." I fully understand his concern, and I am glad to be able to share his ultimate confidence. No bureaucratic fiat can break Brodsky's compact with the Russian poetic idiom or impair his increasing mastery over it. Moreover, the richness and versatility of his gifts, the liveliness and vigor of his intelligence, and his increasingly intimate bond with the Anglo-American literary tradition, augur well for his survival in exile, indeed for his further creative growth.

Translating poetry is always a hazard: few Russian poets have survived being rendered into English without significant distortion or diminution. Considering the difficulty of his task, George Kline has performed very creditably. To be sure, there are losses: some euphonic effects have been muffled, some crisp lines flattened. But more often than not Professor Kline manages to convey the tenor, the intent and the rhythm of the original with intelligent fidelity and effectiveness. These are truly authorized translations, a product of close collaboration and genuine affinity between the poet and the translator. George Kline was one of the first serious Western students of Russia to "discover" Brodsky and alert the rest of us to his promise. It is fitting that he should be the one to introduce this judicious selection from Brodsky's verse to a wider English-speaking audience.

Victor Erlich

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GUIDES TO THE RUINS

SAMUEL BECKETT. By A. Alvarez. The Viking Press. $2.25.
A READER'S GUIDE TO SAMUEL BECKETT. By Hugh Kenner. Farrer, Straus and Giroux. $7.95.
THE LOST ONES. By Samuel Beckett. Grove Press. $4.95.

What does a new reader need from a primer on Beckett? Most likely, he will want help first with those elusive narratives abstracted beyond all likelihood, tales of "formal brilliance and indeterminable purport." Beckett himself has consistently forsworn hidden meanings and claims never to have heard the harmonies perceived by Joyce. But doubts persist. If Beckett is not an allegorist, his novels and plays move teasingly towards generalizations. Which ones, and how do we know?

On first acquaintance the disparity between style and subject matter is another source of trouble: "a bow tie about a throat cancer," Beckett once said. Not even Swift was more poised in treating cruelty and decomposition; and Beckett's elegant savagery is devoid of indignation. Here, for instance, he talks of *his* Lemuel towards the end of *Malone Dies:*

> Flayed alive by memory, his mind crawling with cobras, not daring to dream or think and powerless not to, his cries were of two kinds, those having no other cause than moral anguish and those, similar in every respect, by means of which he hoped to forestall same.

Horror, studied enumeration, and the legalistic fussiness at the close—the mix inspires anxious laughter. "Flayed alive" seems to echo Swift's observation about the woman whose appearance was altered for the worse, and of course there is only one other Lemuel. But it is not easy here (or elsewhere in Beckett) to know exactly what to make of the allusiveness.

Then, too, there are the inevitable questions about the movement of Beckett's entire career. John Updike once called him "a proud priest perfecting his forlorn ritual," and new readers will want some assessment of this most unlikely divine, his canonical books, and his inexhaustible faculty of negation. What about the shifts back and forth from English to French and from fiction to drama? How does one compare and evaluate different pieces of his ruthlessly minimal art? When is the art of limited means governed by the law of diminishing returns, and why?

About many of these issues, A. Alvarez is only intermittently helpful. He is an impatient critic, eager to make stirring generalizations about extremity

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and terror, but often too restless to look attentively at the text in front of him. About Beckett's world he has trustworthy things to say, but about Beckett's books he is often evasive and misleading. He doesn't much like the fiction (a fatal disqualification for a survey writer), and in his desire to get on to the plays, he is unfair to at least half of Beckett's achievement. Obsessed with their difficulty and seeming narrowness of range, Alvarez does not see the extraordinary emotional and intellectual variety of books like *Molloy* and *Malone Dies* (written in Beckett's favorite "incandescent grey"). Nor is he willing to allow that even the less successful novels have their glories. *Watt,* for instance, has Arsene's inspired monologue on the nature of desire, and the marvelous descriptions of Mr. Hackett, the Galls, and the Micks'—those "heroic figures unique in the annals of cloistered fornication."

Alvarez is much better on the plays and on Beckett's importance for the modern theater, but even here haste and a certain solemnity result in peculiar distortions. He sees no humor in *Godot,* misreads the closing scene of *Endgame,* and flattens some of Beckett's finest writing with his own heavy prose. After quoting the brilliant description of suicide from *Eh Joe,* he remarks: "Like many other passages in Beckett, this has the sharpness and economy of poetry and yet remains narrative, taking the listener effectively from one point in time to another." When Alvarez does face a difficult critical issue straight on, the result can be bizarre. "Beckett," he tells us, "is not an allegorist; he simply looks allegorical in lieu of anything else—because, that is, he has never been interested in plots. . . . Hence those larger apparently allegorical meanings are it would seem haphazard; they are the more or less random effects of Beckett's over-education."

On this point, and on most others, Hugh Kenner is more helpful. Although he and Alvarez must have written their books at roughly the same time, Kenner's *Guide* reads uncannily like a corrective to the other man's excess. If Alvarez spends five pages explaining why a comparison of Beckett and Ionesco is pointless, Kenner in a sentence says: "It is not a useful bracketing." When Alvarez argues that "the final irreducible content of all Beckett's work is depression," Kenner chides those who account for Beckett's writing by the simple "hypothesis of constitutional gloom." While Alvarez pursues generalizations about desolation in a post-atomic age, Kenner tries to teach his readers "relevant habits of attention."

For a critic customarily given to fancifulness and strutting, Kenner has surprisingly pared his style for the occasion, and generally moves with quiet discernment through three dozen novels, stories, and plays. (There is some talk about torques, valencies, and Pozzo as a Gestapo officer, but much less than one would expect.) Having written on Beckett before and having taught the books for years, he knows how to anticipate the problems an ordinary

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reader will face:

> Each time we confront a new Beckett work we are installed in some new world, a world where men wait, a world where women sink into the sand, a world where couples lie barely breathing in symmetrical entombment. We deduce the world's rules of order and adduce pertinent memories of other orders.

In his best chapters, Kenner carefully deduces the new rules of order and helps us see which memories of old orders are pertinent and suggestive. The new rules are those insinuating rituals invented by Beckett to dramatize basic human processes and states: Murphy desiring, Watt serving, Molloy travelling, Moran searching, Malone writing, the Unnamable talking, Estragon waiting, Hamm acting, Krapp listening, and dozens of others falling, crawling, fleeing, dying. Most relevant among the old orders are works of art: *The Divine Comedy,* Shakespeare's plays, *Paradise Lost,* and *The Bible.* Beckett's acerbic allusiveness always emphasizes the distance between his frantic, disintegrating protagonists and the heroes of old, but it also has the mysterious connecting effect of certain kinds of irony. When Nell is discovered to have died in her garbage can and Hamm says: "Our revels now are ended," we laugh, feel pain, and are struck by the bizarre suggestiveness of the link with *The Tempest:* Hamm as Prospero, king of his little room, in a play about playing, but perhaps more like Caliban, the beast and the bloody handkerchief, brave new world that has such people in it. . . . and so on. The links are not systematic, like Joyce's, but local, bitter, going into the skin like hooks.

That Beckett is still inventing new rules and asking us to attend to old orders is evident in his most recent extended work, *The Lost Ones.* That he remains a difficult writer can be shown by a glance at the commentaries provided by Alvarez and Kenner. Published first in French and then two years ago in Beckett's English translation, *The Lost Ones* describes life inside a flattened cylinder fifty metres round and eighteen metres high. Two hundred and five naked bodies roam about searching in vain for something lost but indeterminate. Against the walls are fifteen ladders which climbers regularly mount in hope of finding temporary refuge in alcoves or a permanent way out of the top of the enclosure. The arena itself is divided into three zones and the searchers into four groups: those who are always searching; those who sometimes pause in their search; those who used to search but now remain sedentary; and those who no longer search and are vanquished. The temperature, rising and falling from 5° to 25° every eight seconds, greatly pains the skin; the light, a dim, quivering yellow, blurs into a "fiery flickering murk" that eventually burns out the eyes. During the brief course of the narrative, we learn about the laws of the cylinder, and the habits, preroga-

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tives, and sufferings of this "little band of searchers." In the final moments, darkness descends, the temperature rests near freezing, and life comes to a stop.

Although Dante appears once with his "rare, wan smile," and mention is made of Milton's pandemonium, the notion of hell in *The Lost Ones* is all Beckett's—blanched, pitiless, described from an enormous height by a voice with ancient and desperate knowledge. As always, the voice is the thing: at first, clipped, dry, incantatory, but notational; low, dull, faintly humming. Gradually, as we attend to the words cut and then positioned as if each were a precious stone, we hear surprising modulations not apparent at the start. The voice begins to doubt, qualify, and contradict its earlier observations; and from behind the screen of detachment comes the torment of the searching creatures condemned to ardent life in the press and gloom of the cylinder.

Phantasmagorical, but—as often in Beckett—firmly linked to ordinary life. Time and again, the alien events inside the cylinder (the mysterious law-making, the mechanical questing, the sudden explosions of violence) send chills of recognition out to more familiar spheres. Beckett's hell has always been here and now: a place of precise geography, obscure origins, and uncertain purpose, inhabited by creatures who seek, suffer, fail to find, and cannot stop seeking. The earlier versions *(The Trilogy, Godot, Endgame,* and others) are richer, more various and densely populated than *The Lost Ones,* but this miniature has its own desolate power.

Little of what is provocative about *The Lost Ones* comes across from the brief remarks of Alvarez and Kenner. Beckett writes of hell; Alvarez calls it purgatory. Alvarez describes the lost bodies "each searching restlessly for its mate"; the story says clearly enough: "whatever it is they are searching for it is not that." After calling Beckett's unadorned threnody "rather long-winded" like a "report of a civil service commission," Alvarez suggests that "perhaps one motive for the work was to ask how the oldest of Beckett's heroes [Belaqua] looks forty years later." Kenner gets the image right: the cylinder is "some nether hell"; but he too is careless about details (falsely describing the vanquished searchers as immobile); and he soon loses interest entirely, ending with a few random comparisons to other pieces of the Beckett residua. *The Lost Ones* deserves better, and I wish Kenner had coerced his customary habits of attention. There's unexplored life in those sombre ruins.

Lawrence Graver

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SEX FOR THE SEVENTIES

SEXUAL BEHAVIOR IN THE 1970S. By Morton Hunt. Playboy Press. $10.95.

Having read snippets of the *Playboy* serialization of this book in the barber shop, I approached the finished product with a wary eye. "The most extensive national survey since Kinsey," proclaims the jacket, and I suppose that's true. Compared with Kinsey, however, *Sexual Behavior in the 1970s* is distinctly lightweight. It is, one might say, a quickie, commissioned by the Playboy Foundation no more than three years ago and undertaken by the author—on his own admission—for financial reward. Its findings are based on 2026 questionnaires administered by the Research Guild, Inc., "an independent market-survey and behavioral-research organization with headquarters in Chicago." The respondents, who were selected to represent a cross section of the nation, met in groups of sixteen with a staff member from the Guild and filled in their questionnaires "only after extensive discussion" (the purpose of which, presumably, was to clarify ambiguities and break down inhibitions). The data from the questionnaires were then fleshed out by materials from two hundred interviews taped by Hunt and his wife.

The Kinsey Reports rested on a much more substantial empirical base. For one thing, Kinsey's sample, gathered over a period of fifteen years, was nine times as large as Hunt's. He could therefore make distinctions for which Hunt lacks the statistical means. The larger sample also meant that his findings with respect to relatively unusual sexual practices are much more reliable than Hunt's. (When Hunt attempts to discuss what he calls sexual deviance, the actual cases he has to work with are so few that his conclusions amount to little more than educated guesswork.) Perhaps most important of all, Kinsey based his research not on questionnaires but on systematic personal interviews, which, he argued persuasively, were far better suited to elicit precise and candid sexual histories.

There are grounds, then, for doubting the soundness of Hunt's methodology. There is also much to be objected to in his manner. He implies that the Playboy Foundation will be displeased with his conclusions since they fail to support the famous playboy philosophy. But the Foundation will find a great deal to satisfy its prurient interests in the book's format. Each chapter is prefaced by a page of appetizers from the taped case histories that will appear at the chapter's end. The intervening statistical analysis is thus made palatable, while the analysis itself legitimizes what might otherwise appear a collection of dirty stories. In general Hunt lacks Kinsey's restraint, and hence his irony. Although he eschews the playboy philosophy, he is not entirely free of

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its rhetoric. Thus sexual conservatives appear in the text as "uptights," and sexual radicals as "swingers."

Despite these faults, and others yet to be noted, *Sexual Behavior in the 1970s* is a better book than I anticipated. It is in fact quite decent and provides a useful documentation of the most important changes that have occurred in American sexual behavior over the past two decades. Since those changes have been so remarkable, the relative crudeness of Hunt's methodology turns out to be more or less immaterial. The book also offers a coherent and reasonable interpretation of our recent sexual history, as well as some provocative criticisms of our current situation.

Hunt's general thesis is that the years since Kinsey, and particularly the last decade, have witnessed an authentic sexual revolution (or, as he prefers to express it, a liberation of sexuality), but a revolution that has not broken with the romantic assumptions of the Western sexual tradition. The two aspects of the revolution that he finds most congenial, and to which he draws greatest attention, are the rise in premarital intercourse and the elaboration of sexual techniques within marriage.

Premarital intercourse has increased so dramatically (it is now enjoyed by 95% of the males and 81% of the females between 18 and 24) that Hunt predicts it will become virtually universal within the next decade. Nevertheless he is at pains to demonstrate that most unmarried persons continue to approach sex with an essentially marital attitude: they seek not only physical but also emotional gratification. The only undesirable effect of this new permissiveness, in Hunt's view, is the tendency of the young to regard sexual liberation as an obligation rather than an opportunity. Worrying about not making it, in other words, has replaced worrying about having done it as the characteristic sexual anxiety of youth.

Hunt considers the impact of the sexual revolution on marriage the most pervasive and beneficial of all. Over the past twenty years, he argues, marital sex has grown more varied, more sensuous, and more democratic. Couples have sex with greater frequency these days, and they spend more time having it (in fact he suggests, rather improbably, that the average duration of intercourse—from penile insertion to orgasm—has increased fivefold in the last two decades). Wives now reach orgasm much more consistently than did their counterparts in the Kinsey era, and in general they play a more active and responsible role in sexual relations. Above all, the foreplay ethic appears to have triumphed completely, as evidenced by increases "of major and historic proportions" in the incidence of fellatio and cunnilingus and the remarkable upsurge of interest in anal sex within marriage. All of this Hunt considers to the good, so long as it occurs within a spontaneous and emotionally significant context. But he worries about what he calls "the effort syn-

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drome," the tendency of husbands and wives to expand their sexual repertory to include practices that they don't really enjoy for fear of seeming old-fashioned or repressed.

Hunt argues that his findings concerning extramarital sex and sexual deviance confirm the basically conservative nature of the sexual revolution. Infidelity is only little more common than it was in Kinsey's day, and the incidence of deviance, he believes, may even have declined.

Unfortunately, his treatment of deviance is statistically unsatisfactory, and it also reveals a regrettable bias. Most of his energy is devoted to refuting Kinsey's findings about the prevalence of homosexuality, and to lobbying for the reinstatement of such terms as abnormal, unnatural, and even pathological as legitimate characterizations of homosexual behavior. Kinsey's figures (the most famous being that 37% of the male population had had at least one homosexual experience to orgasm) are, by general consensus, exaggerated. But Hunt's sample, as he admits, is also untrustworthy since it doesn't include an adequate number of self-confessed homosexuals. I also suspect that the questionnaire format allowed his respondents to deny homosexual experiences with greater ease than was the case with Kinsey's subjects. Kinsey was extraordinarily successful at creating a non-judgmental atmosphere in the interview, and he made it very difficult for his subjects to dissemble. Typically he would ask not, "Have you ever had a homosexual experience?" but, "How old were you when you had your first homosexual experience?"

Because, then, of the limitations of his sample and his method of interrogation, Hunt's conclusion about the incidence of homosexual behavior (namely that it has remained constant) is highly suspect, as are his conclusions regarding sadomasochism, incest, and bestiality. Nor should his homophobia be allowed to pass uncensured. He makes the nice point that "abnormal," "deviant," and "unnatural" are not moral terms but refer, respectively, to the statistical prevalence, the social acceptability, and the evolutionary logic of a particular form of behavior. As such, he argues, they are necessary to orderly and rigorous intellectual discourse. This call for toughmindedness and a repudiation of the kind of slack relativism that has characterized much recent sexual debate is in a way refreshing. But it shows great insensitivity to the political significance of the terms in question. I doubt that they carry entirely unpejorative connotations even for the most disinterested social scientist, let alone the man on the street. One may responsibly (and humanely) assert that homosexuality is relatively uncommon, that it is socially disapproved of, and that it serves no apparent biological purpose, but to insist on labeling it deviant, abnormal, unnatural, or pathological betrays a mean and reactionary spirit. There is more playboy in Hunt's philosophy than he apparently realizes.

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His treatment of extramarital sex is in a sense even less satisfactory. In this instance his statistical findings are probably accurate, but the interpretation he imposes on them represents an exercise in wishful thinking. In effect he permits his marital and romantic prejudices to blind him to both the current reality and the likely shape of things to come.

His general conclusion, as noted, is that extramarital intercourse has increased only insignificantly over the past twenty years. He admits, however, that the statistics on young persons tell a different story. Among men under 25 the incidence of infidelity is up by almost a quarter, and among women in the same age group it has exactly trebled. Hunt maintains, with some reason, that the latter statistic signifies a rejection not so much of monogamy as of the double standard. Still the trend among the young suggests that monogamy may be in serious trouble.

Hunt does his best to minimize the changes that have occurred, and he also draws repeated attention to the hazards of extramarital sex. Nearly all of his interview subjects admit that they have had unfaithful impulses. But those that acted on them usually report that their marriages suffered as a result, while those that resisted them say they did so precisely because of the threat such impulses posed to the emotional stability of their marriages. On both sides, in other words, infidelity is found incompatible with the romantic values that, according to Hunt, remain the basis of even our revolutionized sexual order.

What he fails to elicit from his subjects is any acknowledgment of the liabilities of fidelity. I strongly suspect that the faithful among his subjects, if their feelings were accurately probed, would confess that they resented their lost opportunities for sexual adventure. And as extramarital sex is more openly discussed and tolerated, that resentment will doubtless become increasingly poisonous. Hunt seems to hope that the need for variety can be met through sexual experimentation and inventiveness within marriage. He is, I think, mistaken, in both his judgment and his expectation. The rewards of sexual variety are too substantial and the burdens of monogamy too onerous for the old system to weather the current critique unscathed. Instead the coming decades will probably see an effort to find some compromise between the claims of companionship and adventure. For many, perhaps even the majority, such a compromise may not exist, and for practically no one will it come easily. But I would be very surprised if the statistics on extramarital sex hold as firm during the next twenty years as they apparently have in the last.

Paul A. Robinson

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EAST WIND

EAST GERMAN POETRY: AN ANTHOLOGY. Edited by Michael Hamburger. E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc. $10.00. ($5.95 p.b.).

Michael Hamburger's bilingual anthology of East German poetry is the first of its kind to appear in English. A better introduction would be hard to imagine. Selective, it is yet without bias. A dozen poets are represented with enough poems to give the reader their essence. This anthology contains not a single specimen of official poetry. If it did, we might have been treated to lines like these by the former minister of culture, Johannes Becher:

Lighted by a dream-come-true
Will be born the world anew.

But, lest we jump to wrong conclusions, nearly all of the poets in these pages have chosen to stay in the East, even at the bitter price of persecution and censorship.

Hamburger makes a point of not giving even capsule biographies, since, as he says, these poets have totally renounced the cult of personality. Ordinarily, such editorial restraint would be admirable. But precisely because these poets shun vanity, their biographies are especially moving, and even for us in the West, cautionary.

Since the purpose here is to present the poems, it is generally correct to argue that they need no further elucidation, with the possible exception of poems like Peter Huchel's "Der Garten des Theophrast," where knowledge of the personal circumstances surrounding the writing would enhance the reader's perception, or at least, put him on guard.

With or without biographical notes, no reader can fail to note the absence of all confessional, and nearly all personal, detail. Where the "I" breaks through, it is generally integrated into a greater whole. Insofar as consciousness and language are two-way streams, and insofar as many of these poets aim at changing consciousness through language, they may be said to be political, independent of their subject matter. Insofar as some are deeply humanist in their source, they may be said to be part of an unbroken Western tradition that knows no ideological borders.

The selection opens with Brecht, whose lyric gift was often superior to his dramatic. It is not clear what determined the choice of poems from this immense oeuvre. In the case of Brecht, and Huchel, it would have been of interest to know the dates of the individual poems. Hamburger chooses,

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among others, Brecht's *Buckow Elegies,* one of which, "The Solution," is precisely the kind of political lyric the younger generation has taken as its model: cold facts devoid of any attempt to depict or arouse emotion; an appeal to reason, not passion.

After the Uprising on June Seventeenth
The Secretary of the Authors' Union
Had leaflets distributed in the Stalinallee
Which said that the people
Had forfeited the Government's confidence
And could only win it back
By redoubled labor . . .

This kind of writing is a far cry from the pathos of a Hans Magnus Enzensberger, and the anthology demonstrates that the younger poets of the East have been more faithful to their master.

Of all these poets, Peter Huchel stands out as the hard-honed classic. Readers may recall that in 1971, Huchel, for whom life in the DDR had been made unbearable, was finally granted a visa. Already in 1962, he had been ousted from his post as editor of *Sinn und Form,* for having published works by West German poets as well as Yevtushenko's "Babi Yar." The poem, "The Garden of Theophrastus" appeared in his last issue.

The Garden of Theophrastus

To my son
When at noon the white fire of verses
Flickering dances above the urns,
Remember, my son. Remember the vanished
Who planted their conversations like trees.
The garden is dead, more heavy my breathing,
Preserve the hour, here Theophrastus walked,
With oak bark to feed the soil and enrich it,
To bandage with fiber the wounded bole.
An olive tree splits the brickwork grown brittle
And still is a voice in the mote-laden heat.
Their order was to fell and uproot it,
Your light is fading, defenceless leaves.

Thereafter he was forbidden publication.

Like Günter Eich, Huchel moved away from a dreamy, idyllic view of nature to a cosmic questioning and skepticism, all the more urgent because of its rootedness in small earthy detail. Huchel's compressed concrete image *is*

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the symbol. He is a master of small forms. His language is sparse, full of biblical and classical references. With his growing skepticism, his poetry has progressed to a more laconic style, less regular rhythms, and a renunciation of rhyme. It is unfortunate that it was not possible to include poems from his latest book which came out in 1972 (*Gezählte Tage*). A poem like "Unter der blanken Hacke des Mondes" has no equal in its stark denial of illusion.

Huchel is followed in the selection by Johannes Bobrowski, who was born 14 years later, in 1917, and who died in 1965. Both poets have strong historical roots and great feeling for the land and its people. Their lines are taut, their imagery precise. Many of Brobrowski's poems treat East European landscapes and cities, Jews and Gypsies, as a glance at titles alone indicates: "The Latvian Autumn," "The Volga Towns," "Jakub Bart in Ralbitz." His use of enjambement is often striking, as in the following lines though there is the danger of seeming mannered when overdone:

. . . But the tree
old, there is
a shore, mists with thin
bones move on the river.

In the words of the poet Stefan Hermlin, "an endless, inexorable East wind courses through these poems." Their rhythms are haunting, restless, and they do not always come across in translation. The English is too smooth, too refined. A word like "hinaufgehn" becomes "ascending"; inversions are put in their proper order, and in the end the urgency, the mystery, is gone.

With Günter Kunert we come to a new notion of poetry. We leave the realm of the lyric form and enter a harsher world. Born in 1929, Kunert is a direct descendant of Brecht. His poems are didactic, without metaphor. Often they do not succeed at all as poems. Poetry-writing is a questionable office and, in his own words, "to say the right thing is more than correctness." His themes oscillate between the poles of political consciousness and the internal conflict of the individual, in particular, the individual as poet.

Reiner Kunze, whose poem "Dialectics" was the object of attack at the 6th Congress of the Writers' Union of the DDR in 1969, has been an outspoken critic of the regime. "Dialectics" is a play on a Stalinist-colored history of the Russian Communist Party. When Peter Huchel left the DDR, he wrote deploring that:

The newspapers reported
no loss.

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Kunze is master of the minimal poem; not telegraph style, but Morse code.

The remaining pages are devoted to poets born in the 1930s. Of these, Wolf Biermann is the best known, though by no means the most interesting. Interesting is the fact that although he has not been allowed to perform or publish since 1965, he declares himself a citizen of the DDR, and would want to live nowhere else.

The most obviously engagé of these poets is Volker Braun, who identifies with the youth of his country and speaks their language. His tone is provocative, aggressive. In East Germany he is regarded as a kind of miniature Mayakovsky. Ironically enough, despite his continued declarations of loyalty, he has continued difficulties with the regime. His most interesting poem, in its use of traditional material to make contemporary statements, is "Prometheus," where he reverses the order of things to have man carry fire up to the sky in a socialist statement of people power.

Altogether it is striking to consider the preoccupation of these poets with the past, not in any nostalgic sense, but in a never-ending dialectic exchange. The very writing of poetry becomes more and more problematical with the younger poets. What should the function of a poem be in a socialist society?

In his introduction, the editor says of the translators, "it was their job to present as close a rendering as possible of each poet's manner of writing," and that "poetry as austere as most of this . . . calls for a corresponding austerity on the translator's part." In most cases, this high ideal was lived up to (a large number of the translations are by Michael Hamburger himself), and the results are translations of unusual quality. Only some of the younger poets seem a bit too elegant in English, as where Volker Braun's "Das schiesst ins Kraut," a very earthy proverb, is translated as "This proliferates." But these are minor lapses.

Through this volume a significant gap in contemporary literature has been narrowed for the English-speaking reader. With it, the old question is raised again: in what climate does poetry thrive? At what point does constraint mute, or smug freedom extinguish, the lyric voice?

Betty Falkenberg

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BLACK WRITING

INTERVIEWS WITH BLACK WRITERS. By John O'Brien. Liveright. $8.95 ($2.95 p.b.).

"The first problem," John O'Brien begins in the introduction to his collection of interviews with seventeen black American writers, "is describing what is meant by a black literary tradition." Definition by race alone is not only a tautology, but prejudicial to the works themselves, since critics have not always remembered that the tradition is a literary one as well as social, political, and ethnic. Hence the bible of American scholars, the *Literary History of the United States,* even in its revised edition limits discussion of recent black literature to Adam Clayton Powell (as a "publicist"); and when the new *LHUS* appears next year, one can be sure that Eldridge Cleaver, Julius Lester, and Malcolm X will dominate the latter pages, after the obligatory mention of Charles Chesnutt, W. E. B. DuBois, and James Weldon Johnson.

Several of the writers John O'Brien talked with took exception to this scheme of black American literature. "When somebody like Peter Prescott comes out and says the most interesting writing from blacks are the autobiographies of Malcolm X and Eldridge Cleaver," Ishmael Reed complains, "it's like saying the most interesting white literature is Richard Nixon's *Six Crises* and Dwight Eisenhower's *Stories I Tell My Friends.*" John A. Williams adds that he never sees his books compared to Styron's, Bellow's, or even Bruce Jay Friedman's—instead it's Chestnutt, DuBois, and Johnson, or his "contemporaries" such as Cleaver. Therefore O'Brien has structured his interviews to reveal the aesthetic rather than just the racial range of writings by Reed and Williams, and also Arna Bontemps, Cyrus Colter, William Demby, Owen Dodson, Ralph Ellison, Ernest J. Gaines, Michael Harper, Robert Hayden, Clarence Major, Julian Mayfield, Ann Petry, Alice Walker, John Edgar Wideman, Charles Wright, and Al Young.

The result is not only a group of compelling interviews, but one of the most important contributions to the scholarship of black literature since Robert A. Bone's pioneering work of a decade ago. For each conversation O'Brien writes a succinct headnote, describing and analyzing the writer's work. And the general introduction makes several points about black literature that have not previously received such coherent expression. To the idea that the black literary tradition has oral roots, O'Brien adds the clarification that "From the beginning there seems to be an antagonism toward the written word, partially because it lacks immediacy." The result is a clearer understanding of a densely experimental fictionist such as Imamu Baraka, who rejects words as the proper medium of artistic expression and chooses instead the activity of jazz, where language can be less "a medium for rational communication than as a

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way of mesmerizing readers by sounds and rhythms. The meanings are there, but we are led into them not by the traditional devices of plot and character, but through episodes that are held together by recurring images." In a larger view, O'Brien finds many contemporaries taking "the hard realities of sociology—formerly the exclusive domain of the naturalistic writer—and transforming them into imaginative and innovative works." Their technique for such may be as particular as John Edgar Wideman's ("it attempts to orchestrate on the page the inner thoughts of people and treat those in the same way as a conventional novel would treat dialogue") or as general as William Demby's ("That's the way a novel should be—not linear, not in a kind of horizontal sequence of events, but as one perceives reality looking at that enormous tapestry upon which any number of things are happening: horses in battle, men being killed, troops lining up. You're supposed to conceive it totally—not look around"). O'Brien's major point, supported by the commentary of the authors themselves, is that the ethic and aesthetic of black literature is something different from the rest of the *LHUS:*

> Whereas American literature is generally a record of man's inability to transcend the past (either historical or personal), black literature consistently reflects an individual's and a society's ability to escape the past and prepare for a future. In other words, this literary tradition has no sense of or belief in determinism. This antideterminism may in part be attributed to the absence of theological concerns in black literature. Without this sense of God, the black writer avoids the dilemmas that face so many other American writers. Problems of good and evil are never raised to an abstract plane, where man is helpless in trying to discover their obscure meanings. This whole philosophy suggests that the black American writer does not belong to the Calvinistic tradition of thought that has so strongly influenced the American consciousness. No characters in black literature are driven by the need to subdue the force of evil, as is Melville's Ahab, nor are they wracked by the doubts of Hawthorne's heroes, nor by the disbelief that Hemingway's characters wish they could escape. The black writer conceives of good and evil in terms of man-made creations which—since man has made them—he can change.

From here O'Brien and the writers he interviews establish the largely experimental nature of much contemporary black literature. "Perhaps we should look at psychology as essentially an imaginative act," he agrees with Clarence Major, whose *All-Night Visitors* and *No* "show all the shifting elements of the so-called self." From John Edgar Wideman's fiction we learn that even such stock-in-trade ethnic scenes as lynchings can cause "less a political upheaval than an imaginative one," and that the prime consideration in art for racial relations is the imagination, "because the imagination plays such a powerful role in the relationship between blacks and whites in America . . . It's not what we are, it's what we think we are. From the very beginning

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Western civilization has had an idea of what black men are. . . ." John A. Williams discusses how he has "an inclination to do to the novel what Charlie Parker did to jazz," to improvise upon the old forms and create new meanings. For Al Young's fiction and for his poetry as well, "the dance is the most dramatic and satisfying image for what's really going on in creation," the perfect metaphor "to describe the natural movement of my own life." Most of all, the new black artist is a shaman: "his language can change things, if only by changing the way one other person looks at 'reality.' Poets should alert people to the fact that they have imaginations." The novelist Charles Wright "creates a fictional world in order to make something real," even as reality in *The Messenger* and *The Wig* and in his journalistic *Absolutely Nothing to Get Alarmed About* "keeps outstripping the imagination." If it seems a hassle to keep up with the more inventive experimenters, realize that they are having a hard time keeping up themselves, with us.

The leading spokesman for the new style of black writing has been Ishmael Reed, and his dialogue with John O'Brien offers the most articulate defense of his own innovative fictions and those of his colleagues. "I think that the Western novel is tied to Western epistemology, the way people in the West look at the world"; on the contrary, he sees his own books "as amulets, and in ancient African cultures words were considered in this way. Words were considered to have magical meanings and were considered to be charms." But Reed does not carry this Africanism too far; he is preeminently an American writer, and it is by purely American criteria that he wishes to be judged. To L. E. Sissman, who ranked his novels short of Emily Brontë 's, Reed replies, "This is the kind of confusion and ignorance that you have prevailing in the American critical establishment. A man comparing my work—I grew up in Buffalo, New York, an American town—comparing it with a woman writer of nineteenth-century England who was involved with different problems and a different culture." It is interesting to learn that *The Free-Lance Pallbearers* "actually started out as a political satire on Newark. It was going to be a naturalistic, journalistic, political novel. But as it went through draft after draft, the style I thought was mine came back and I developed it." That personal style is the result of studying Americana in the Bancroft Library, but also from the native absorption of vaudeville, comic-strips, and tv: "I've watched television all my life and I think my way of editing, the speed I bring to my books, is based upon some of the television shows and cartoons I've seen, the way they edit. Look at a late movie that was made in 1947—people become bored because there was a slower tempo in those times." Most of all, Ishmael Reed sees himself as a modern American conjure man. "What it comes down to is that you let the social realists go after the flatfoots out there on the beat and we'll go after the Pope and see which action causes a revolution. We are mystical detectives about to make an arrest."

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Race is of course an issue, but in terms of the innovations that fictionists such as Wright, Reed, Major, Wideman and others are attempting, the crucial matter is something they share in common with their white colleagues of the same style—Ronald Sukenick, Gilbert Sorrentino, Steve Katz, Carl Krampf, Raymond Federman, and several more. "There might be a problem," William Demby argues, "but not between black and white, but between the middle-aged and the young. Some critics, I am sure, just aren't with it. That's all." That the fiction which comes as the end product of Reed's and Demby's new aesthetic matches so closely the work of other American innovators suggests that their argument against European determinations applies for all American, non-colonial work.

A final word about the nature of O'Brien's form. The interviews lack the structure of a well argued essay, but just for that reason they stand a better chance of capturing each writer's truth, since whatever comes up is fair game and need not fit the limitations of a strictly coherent thesis. Yet each talk has its order, an organic one which may take the form of Cyrus Colter's distinguished, measured eloquence, Reed's strategic pauses and rapid-fire attacks, Alice Walker's well crafted essay-answers, or Charles Wright's sly chuckles across the long-distance wire from Vera Cruz. For various reasons O'Brien was not able to complete interviews with James Baldwin, Imamu Baraka, and Cecil Brown. Otherwise his book is the most complete record one may find on black literature today, for what each writer tells O'Brien and for what O'Brien so skillfully tells us about each writer and about black literature in general.

Jerome Klinkowitz

THE TEACHINGS OF DON JUAN

THE ADVENTURES OF DON JUAN. By Richard Gardner. The Viking Press. $10.00.

Erudition seems to be taking over pornography, for better or worse denaturing it. Since this has happened before, with Petronius and with Rabelais, one may take it as not only fashionable but traditional that so broad and subtle a scholar as Mr. Gardner should amuse himself with a degrading little scheme: transpose the greatest of erotic legends, Don Juan, from its high place in drama, opera, and even philosophy, down to the stickiest realism of the picaresque novel. The gag is academic, assuming the history of literary

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forms, but its potential for pornographic episodes throughout society and over the wide world is immense. The Mozart opera announced one thousand and three seductions in Spain alone.

Mr. Gardner, however, concentrates, on a relatively few but prodigiously varied episodes, enriching them with fine sensuous detail and especially a style. He does not simply write a historical novel of early seventeenth century Spain—the time and place of the first Don Juan play and, the book plausibly has it, of a real Don Juan—but makes it a picaresque novel in the manner of that time and place, much as if it were by Quevedo. Though the style has the headlong vehemence, the crepitation, and the rhetorical agility of Quevedo, it is rather more than a clever pastiche of the baroque prose of that period. It seems to me to draw on the more sensuous luxuriating prose of the older picaresque tradition, on Petronius and Apuleius, and also on some modern styles, like that of Valle-Inclán. At any rate its most appreciative audience should be the Spanish majors in universities, where it really deserves a seminar, with Octavio Paz perhaps as moderator. Taken unacademically, as a modern work in English, it may seem, for all its verve, just a terrible debauch of vocabulary, images, and rhetorical pranks. Still, there is an audience for contemporary prose of that kind.

The book is Spanish, or very nearly, in spirit as well, and that may make for difficulties. One has to try to feel the inordinate religiosity of the period, the full weight of the Church and its Inquisition, and the visions of the saints. For equilibrium against that excess of sanctity the Spanish mind commonly uses an extreme of obscenity, which has the force of desecration. Mr. Gardner keeps the sanctities as present and powerful as he can, quite properly, but to a reader with a weak sense of religion the concomitant erotic passages may seem arbitrarily forced. They are nauseating—at their best, macabre, as when the hero finds himself in bed with his cancerous grandmother—but they are true to the terms and motives of the culture.

The desecration which may most bother the reader is that of the Don Juan legend itself. This Don Juan is neither the absolute macho nor the pleasure principle incarnate, he is exceptional rather for his failures and an inability to enjoy either himself or women at all fully. The antiheroic switch may be amusing, provided the prime legend is also present, as a foil. In a way it is, for the first Don Juan play is supposed to be in process of being written, by Tirso de Molina on the basis of some fantastic memoirs of the real Don Juan. But I think the presence of the heroic legend is not strong or constant enough to keep the comedy of the antiheroic pointed or from being depressing in the long run. Mr. Gardner may still be right: how much of the heroic can the picaresque novel accommodate? That is one for the seminar.

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Another Spanish sanctity to be sported with is Death. Sometimes this works magnificently, as in the grandmother's preparations for her funeral, sometimes dubiously, as in Don Juan's elaborate escape from death at the end. Again, this may be justified by the form.

One great virtue of the book, about which I have no reservations, is its proficiency in sensuousness. Mr. Gardner seems to have used a Jesuit discipline, the application of the five senses, whenever he possibly could, especially touch and sight. His pictorial handling draws very knowingly on Spanish painting, on Goya in particular, I should say, in all his range from the exquisitely pretty to the grotesque and dreadful, but it reads wonderfully, with or without benefit of art history. None of this richness, nor the verbal richness, which to some tastes must seem excessive, holds up the speed of story and rhetoric. The book may well be conceived or felt in terms of the cinema, combining full color and violent motion, but that is not untrue to the art of the late Renaissance or high baroque, and one may read it with pleasure both ways.

Donald Sutherland

THE SCHOOL AS BATTLEFIELD

THE GREAT SCHOOL WARS, New York City, 1805-1973. A History of the Public Schools as Battlefield of Social Change. **By Diane Ravitch. Basic Books. $12.95.**

The New York City school system is large and cumbersome, it uses an obsolescent plant and some antiquated procedures to provide unreliable services of essential social benefit. It numbers millions of citizens among its clients and beneficiaries, and, like the Penn Central Railroad, it has often been plundered for narrow selfish power struggles pursued without respect for the larger social needs it professed to serve. The public school system is probably no more bureaucratic or unwieldy than other complex institutions in a mass society, and probably less vulnerable to graft. But, as Diane Ravitch's study shows, the history of the public school since 1805, is the history of repeated, increasing, and comprehensive ravages by the forces of ideology. In fact, Mrs. Ravitch's meticulous review asserts that the public schools were, and still are, not merely the reflection of social change but actually the battlefield on which it is staged, and at the same time the schools are the stakes in the

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battle. And, beyond all else, the schools have been inextricably linked with the social and political history of the city, that incredible story of how the small port with the homogeneous population became the immense five-part metropolis, gateway to the American Dream for the "nation of immigrants," and how the scene changed from melting pot to witch's cauldron.

The story is fascinating, and, in Mrs. Ravitch's excellent narrative, inexpressibly sad and sobering. She began her study during the most recent of the "great school wars," the bruising struggle in 1968 in the city-wide teachers' strike. (The phrase was Nicholas Murray Butler's, when he himself had been engaged in one of the earlier school wars, that of the 1890's over centralization and reform.) Further exploration led her to consider other major school conflicts and to find each of them associated with a far-reaching reorganization of the entire school system, each coinciding with a major wave of immigration, and each expressing a profound social issue. Whatever the nature of the next school war now slouching toward 110 Livingston Street, it is to be hoped that those involved will study Mrs. Ravitch's book with humility and care, because the future will set a much harder examination than the Board of Regents.

In the 1840's, a tremendous increase in the number of Irish immigrants —to more than a third of the city's population—precipitated the first of the great school wars, which erupted over the funding of public education. In early New York, the idea of the common school had received legislative approval and support. The system of schools administered by the Public School Society was a model of order and efficiency, and at the time was considered the best in the country. It was the expression of the homogeneous largely Protestant upper-class civic-minded citizens who controlled it, however, and it proved unable to absorb the Irish children without major transformation. The result of a massive and vitriolic Catholic challenge was that although control of the public schools was given a more representative decentralized character, the Catholic claim for public funds was rejected: the city gained a non-sectarian system, and the Catholics were forced to build their own parochial system.

When the next fifty years, with wards, Tammany networks, graft, and spoils, demonstrated all the bad implications of community control then available to experience, another movement for a different kind of reform began to simmer in the minds of participants and observers. Now the unassimilable immigrants were Italians and East European Jews, social and educational reform had become an intense concern of the upper class, and, indeed, it was to be the great age of reform. The crucial role of education in the assimilation of new immigrants had led to an almost religious belief in the school as the most important clue to social reform, preeminent among all the benevolent

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institutions which were to counteract the ravages of industrialism and exploitation. This second school war was about the application of new knowledge to the problem of the schools: new ideas about teaching methods, about curricula, about centralized school administration, new criteria for competence, a merit system for teachers.

The third school war, only a generation later, was in many respects a continuation of the second, ignited by an even sharper increase in immigration, and in a school system which had only superficially yielded to the progressive reforms of the earlier battles. Reform itself had been limited and short-sighted, indifferent to the complex class emotions developing in the newly consolidated metropolitan area. The third school war was fought over efficiency and the politicization of the schools, and was summed up in the struggle and failure of Mayor John Purroy Mitchel and the civic-minded reformers to institute the controversial Gary plan (after the system in Gary, Indiana) in the New York schools. The chief consequence of this war was increased centralization and a universal wish to insulate the schools from politics. As a result, the schools, agents of socialization in an increasingly complex democracy, were unprepared for the eruption of the fourth of the great school wars. The immigration associated with this conflict was that of Blacks and Puerto Ricans after World War II, and the issues were integration, racism, poverty, and community control. By the end, the public school system was decentralized, was attempting to educate a student population more than half Black and Puerto Rican, and, in the turbulent series of events associated with busing and the 1968 teachers' strike, ethnic and class divisions in the city were sharpened and brutalized as they had not been for more than a century. As always, the schools were charged with the responsibility for social change, and when assimilation and integration were discarded as methods or goals, power and poverty became the prominent concerns.

Combatants in this most recent school war thought they were greeting a new dawn, even as they proceeded to reinvent the wheel. Didn't anyone realize that community control had led to the corruption of the 1840's? Or that it could be as important a code word for Queens as for Ocean Hill-Brownsville? For every Rhody McCoy there is a Rosemary Gunning, and there were others before them. Did no one question the wisdom of permitting the Ford Foundation to participate? Scattering largesse, encouraging some groups to seize power, ignoring others, acting covertly to influence the course of events—it was a little like the CIA, and as unaccountable, as elusive. But the Public Education Association, the City Club, the Urban Coalition, and other benevolent agencies had intervened ever since the founding of the school system! And where did the ideas come from, and who should accept responsibility for their powerful effects? I mean, the ideas about the power

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structure, especially "the white power structure," community control, participatory democracy, the assumptions about education as a weapon of instant social change, the ideas about giving power to the poor? Indeed, that whole masquerade party of the middle and late '60's could be examined for useful clues.

In all the disturbed and disturbing events of these school wars, especially in the most recent, the schools themselves tend to recede from scrutiny. What sort of education is now being provided? It seems hard to find out, except for the frequently publicized evidence that reading is becoming a lost art, and the equally troubling sanction for bilingualism and for a misguided cultural pluralism. Those who do not have children in the New York public schools may see only the power struggles, and, during the 1968 strike, some found the teachers' position as repellent as they found the confrontations exhilarating. Everybody behaved badly. Are things any better now? It would be extremely interesting to have the whole matter reviewed by a French educational administrator, perhaps even the chief of a school system in a former French colony. Have the momentous conflagrations really established certain principles, accelerated political and moral refinement in the way great events in history do, or has the cost been too oppressive for what was achieved?

Sonya Rudikoff

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VARIETY

S FOR STEINBERG

You want to begin talking about Steinberg with an elaborate *S*, the ends squiggling out in illegible calligraphy, so infectious is his flourished line. Yet his sixth book, *The Inspector,*[1] is his least playful. The first to fall under a mood, it is stark-grotesque, funny-strange. Here on barren plains broken by updated 20th Century-Fox and Le Corbusier buildings; here among cross-patched rocks under tiffs of clouds; here among people made of dots, or labyrinths, women all legs and head, rows of paper-bag faces, single faces uttering teeth charts or abstractions like designs for machines—people in so many styles and shapes that the human seems a lost category, a myth of Renaissance painting; here among crocodile-and-jackal-pursued pedestrians in wired compounds or bordering Futurist streaks of cars or colossal collision heaps; people arranged on stepped pedestals and stairways to nothing; people incommunicative, without vital innards: here weighs a bleak silence, a weird absence of anything to be said. Here too, round official seals give earnest, like the stamps on money, of government approval. And here appear the inspectors, mostly dark-clad sloping-shouldered men in round hats, looking as at home as they would in Kafka's *Trial.* In the final picture these sinister rubber-stamped figures, grouped on hills under solar notary seals, have nothing left to inspect, everything having become arid, official. Their faces obscure, they stand looking off in what seems to be the direction of the reader . . .

Now and again old-style Steinberg gives humorous if not metaphysical relief. Long-familiar motifs—uniquely his—reappear with delighting inexhaustibility. We find more funny-sad variations on the theme of days, weeks, years (a man standing on NOW, for instance, being fired upon by NEVER) more, too, of those drawings, often involving huge question marks, that turn human perplexity into block-lettered or geographical situation comedy. And if you thought Steinberg could improvise no further on music composition paper, here are several surprises. Finally—treating solemn, indeed fierce, activity lightly—appear still more cartoons of the Steinbergian artist, busy as always completing or elaborating his own figure, since he is what he creates as well as creator, or drawing what otherwise escapes the drawing board (the drawing being more idea than paper, more sensuous impulse than idea). All show the combination of incisive conceptual wit and airy command of line that is Steinberg's brilliant charm.

So the old Steinberg laughs along with the new, who doesn't even seem to be smiling. And this, in truth, adds needed spirit to the volume. For the new-style drawings languish under

1. *The Inspector.* By Saul Steinberg. The Viking Press. $10.00

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an uncertain aim. Hitherto Steinberg's jokes carried his lines; his essence was wit ("I am a writer who can't write"). The new drawings, however, are too desultory to be witty. Lacking the pointedness of cartoons, neither are they serious (simultaneously gripping and elusive) works of art. They seem waylaid between Doodle and Caricature. Too aggressive for *jeu d'esprit,* their charge is yet defused. Steinberg's longstanding love-hate relationship with avant-garde art has evidently been joined by repugnance for the technocratic forces it often seems to annotate (in his brave new America, even Uncle Sam is an abstract expressionist). At the same time, his modern-artist's fascination with distortion—with nature worked over by man—aligns him with his subjects. His dislike of the official-smelling future consequently never reddens into self-justifying savage caricature. Most of his drawings actively put you off—you want to stop this world —but, with few exceptions, they are not so much negative or uncanny as queer: Krazy-Kat primitive, Pop Art bold, or busy with a Barthelme-like hodgepodge of objects and styles.

The arbitrariness of the new drawings also lies in the pick-a-card quality of their modes. With his ever-swelling kit bag of lines, forms, rubber stamps, styles, not to mention his prankiness, Steinberg is certainly up to date. But so far he is on top of all styles in what Marinetti called "the superhuman, cool Distraction of Art," and not at the service of the necessity that a certain style, if you listened to it, lived with it, reinvented it, might impose. His super-style has everything its member styles possess severally except their power (their necessity) in the hands of the major artists. In short, although attempting more than before (if in one sense less), Steinberg is still light.

Maybe his space-age mood needs only the opportunities, the sensual counterpoint, of paint (a medium lately adopted). Easily the best things offered by *The Inspector* are the color pictures on the front and back. Each shows the dark, hole-faced inspector low on a shore against lovely bands and blurs of color under towering cumuli so moist you can smell tomorrow's rain; and these clouds are branded with the ubiquitous illegible stamps. The contrast between spirit-lifting sensuousness and eerie humanity, inhuman officialness, is quite wonderful. These paintings elicit more of what we are than the drawings. If their conception is cool, it is not shut down, and they fetch us into their midst. They are larger than our expectations. They have poetry. It would be a pity to lose the humorist in Steinberg, but what good fortune should we gain a painter.

Calvin Bedient

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COMMUNICATIONS

AN EXCHANGE ON WATERGATE:

Tea Party

I have read William Phillips's comment on Watergate with interest. The argument is plausible, but I disagree with it in two basic respects.

Phillips finds "something very reassuring in the ultimate response of Congress, the media, and public opinion on the whole, to Nixonian politics"; I do not. Secondly, I do not agree that Watergate surpassed earlier "attempts to muzzle dissent" mostly in degree, not in kind (corruption, perhaps, is another matter). Thus on the one hand I feel that the whole incident, including the public response, is much less significant than the PR editorial comment suggests. And at the same time, I believe that Watergate differs in kind, not merely degree, from earlier exercises in state repression. This may seem paradoxical at first, but a more careful look will show that it is not.

During the period of the Watergate disclosures, the FBI was compelled on Court order in various civil suits to reveal memoranda dating from October 1961 on programs to disrupt left-wing and Black organizations. These programs were put into operation on the explicit grounds that the "targeted groups" were engaged in such crimes against the state as running candidates in local elections, supporting integration in the South, opposing US policy in Cuba and Vietnam, driving FBI agents off campus, and defaming the Director. Among the measures advocated and employed were false arrest, fabrication of documents, harassment of free schools, and in general, extensive measures to promote factionalism, to discredit these organizations and to prevent their functioning and growth. Agents were instructed to "inspire action in instances where circumstances warrant." While the exact range of actions inspired is unknown, there is strong evidence that the FBI was involved in one political assassination, one case of killing after entrapment, a case of attempted murder, and much else. For some documentation, see Frank Donner, *The Nation*, June 1, 1974; my article in *Ramparts*, June 1974; and the depositions in the Fred Hampton civil suit.

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In comparison with the FBI programs of repression, all initiated under the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, Watergate was a tea party. Thus, it is not true that Watergate exceeds other efforts at repression in scale. Quite the contrary. Nothing attributed to Nixon and his cohorts begins to compare with the measures undertaken to disrupt the left under the Democratic Administrations of the 1960s, and continued by Nixon until 1971. Though the Articles of Impeachment charge misuse of the FBI, the really extensive programs to deny constitutional rights of citizens were neither cited nor debated.

But Watergate does differ in kind from earlier efforts. Namely, the targets in the Watergate affair were close to the political and ideological center. The lesson of Watergate is clear: against such foes, one will undertake measures of repression only at one's peril. But against the Socialist Workers Party, the Black Panthers, SNCC, or the New Left, virtually anything is permitted. No issue of principle arises in the Watergate proceedings. Nixon's crime was not the choice of means, but the choice of enemies.

The lesson is underscored by the response to Watergate in the liberal media (*The Nation* being a notable exception). Thus, hardly an issue of the *New Republic* went by without a denunciation of Richard Nixon for his attack on our sacred democratic liberties, but I recall no comment at all on the far more extreme measures undertaken by the FBI against the left, exposed during the same period. The same is true of the press quite generally.

The same point is driven home by the fact that the international crimes of Nixon and Kissinger were excluded from the Articles of Impeachment. In fact, they barely figured in the Committee debate. True, the matter of the "secret" bombing of Cambodia was raised, but the emphasis was on the "secrecy," not the act of aggression against a neutral country. Furthermore, the bombing of Cambodia and Laos was "secret" only because of the self-censorship of the press. A few days after the systematic bombing of Cambodia was initiated in March 1969, the Cambodian government protested vigorously against "the latest bombing, the victims of which were Khmer peasants, women and children in particular," and demanded that these "criminal attacks" against "peaceful Cambodian farmers" be terminated at once. The Cambodian Government called upon all countries "to double their effort to put an end to these barbarous crimes against humanity." In January 1970 the Cambodian Government issued an official White Book giving details of US and GVN attacks on Cambodian villages, with names, dates, places and casualty statistics. This was reported at once in the international press, as were earlier eyewitness reports of the massive bombardment of Northern Laos, far from any zone of combat, in an effort to destroy the Pathet Lao. Ample evidence was available to the American press, which chose to remain silent. There were a few exceptions, among them, a now famous article in the *NY*

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Times reporting alleged US air attacks against "North Vietnamese" base camps in Cambodia. In general, the press chose to suppress the facts, only later to lament hypocritically that the government had been lying.

The FBI programs of repression instituted from October 1961 to May 1968 were explicitly modelled on the successful campaign that destroyed the Communist Party. The latter was well-known, and generally viewed with equanimity. The application of similar means to a far wider range of organizations under the most liberal Democratic Administrations also apparently arouses no outrage, and seems to require no comment on the part of many civil libertarians who were so distressed over the Watergate escapades, trivial in comparison. For this reason, I find nothing reassuring in the response to Nixonian politics. It is not reassuring that American liberalism will fight to save its own skin. Rather, the general response reveals again the subservience of the media to repressive ideology and institutions, and the erosion of commitment to elementary civil rights.

Phillips notes that "if we don't know Nixon's aims and motives, then Watergate has no political meaning." I would suggest that the statement be rephrased. Watergate has no political meaning, except insofar as it demonstrates the obvious: repression is to be restricted to those who challenge the prevailing ideology, and even mild variants of familiar measures are not to be applied against those who wield power and authority. Correspondingly, the question of Nixon's aims and motives is of limited interest.

With the Presidential pardon, the matter ends where it began: more farce than tragedy. If Ford has enough of a sense of humor, he will arrange for everyone involved to be pardoned—except John Dean. The tragedy is that the international crimes of Nixon and Kissinger and the systematic repression of dissent are so easily tolerated, or simply ignored, by liberal opinion.

Noam Chomsky

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Trauma

As I said in my original comment, Chomsky is right when he points out that most liberals (myself included) did not protest the persecution, legal and illegal, of dissident sects on the far "left." In their (and my) defense, all I can say is that I, for one, was fed up with stupid, irresponsible, extreme acts being justified in the name of revolution, progress, enlightenment, justice, etc. I think the cause of socialism and of enlightened social reform would be advanced by making clear that not every kind of illiterate stand and violent gesture is radical or progressive. But, of course, even mindless politics has legal rights.

I still think it was reassuring to see an aroused public opinion finally sweep Nixon and his buddies out of the White House, because, it will be recalled, we were afraid the country was so brainwashed and apathetic there was almost nothing it couldn't swallow. Even if Nixon wasn't Hitler, the noose around the organs of liberal opinion was getting too tight for anyone's comfort. Watergate must be seen if not as a preparation for a putsch at least as an attempt to corrupt and terrorize independent thought and institutions—to which I assume the only ones indifferent are those sectarian Marxists who believe that in the long run capitalist society remains capitalist society, and is, therefore, always potentially repressive. But the long run is made up of short runs.

Chomsky says Watergate is different from the earlier muzzling of dissenters only in that it affected the political Establishment. But this seems to me an important difference, for the intimidation of "those who wield power and authority" could have far-reaching social effects, not the least of which might be acceptance of a more repressive government.

Besides, with the impotence of the left today, it is simply suicidal not to recognize that we all have a stake in the preservation of liberalism. To take a revolutionary stand when there are no revolutionary movements might seem to be morally and politically pure. But it is also self-defeating for it serves to incite the right while lacking the means to combat it.

Still, one must respect Chomsky for taking the longer, uncompromising view, even though he makes me feel impure whenever I try to be practical.

William Phillips

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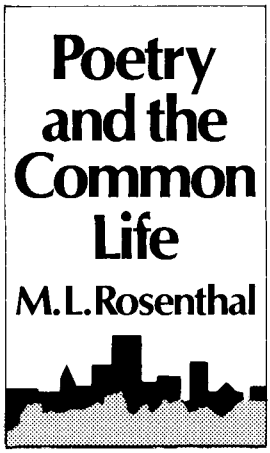

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